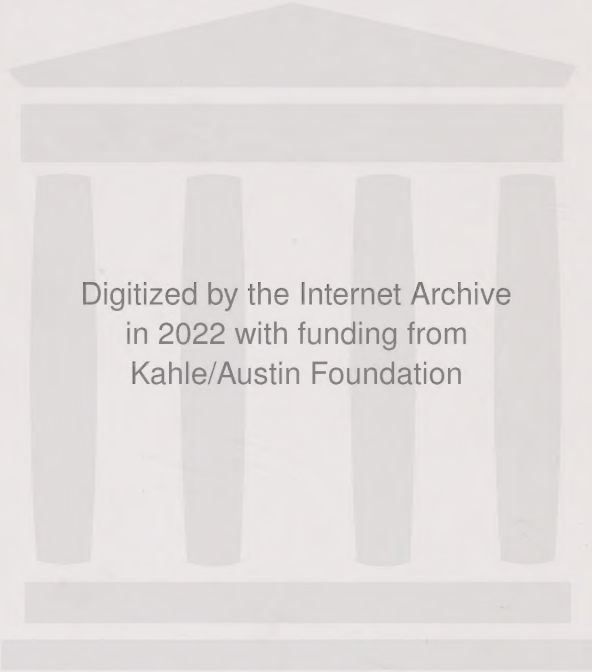


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A WAR-TIME VOYAGE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MY VAGABONDAGE

SEA-PIE

EPISTLES FROM

DEEP SEAS

ETC. ETC.





Yours very truly
J. E. Patterson

A WAR-TIME VOYAGE

BEING THE ITINERARY OF AN
OCEAN-TRAMP FROM PORT TO PORT

1916-17

BY

J. E. PATTERSON



R 16162

1918

LONDON & TORONTO

J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.

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TO SIR EDWARD NICHOLL, R.N.R.

TO WHOM I AM INDEBTED FOR THE VOYAGE RE-
CORDED HEREIN

DEAR SIR EDWARD,—How shall one begin to write a book? Momentous question!—fit almost to rank with Pilate's, and quite so to the writer himself when he, or she, is faced by the problem and can see a dozen different solutions—such as they are. Wherever you be there are so many ways to Rome, straight or round-about; but only the one for you, if you're an individualist. And even if you have been there on other occasions, each time finding a way that suited you, it doesn't say that you will do the same when next you go. In fact, the more often you have been there, the more difficult it becomes to discover a new track for each journey.

Here I am pulled up by the fact that my simile has run out of keeping. And being so intolerant a lover of justice, of the whole truth being stated on both sides, I must needs point out that in going to Rome, whether you start east, west, north, or south, you have only the known countries—unchanging in your time—through which to travel. And although you go by air, sea, or land, valley or mountain, railway, road, or unbeaten path, you're bound to

find a sameness on the second journey by any one of the ways.

On the other hand every book of reminiscences—even if not every other book—is, or should be, the expression of a mood ; and every true literary mood is too distinctive for Nature to repeat it. As all intuitive women, and some men, know, a creative atmosphere once lost is never properly recovered ; a part, or a semblance, of it may be ; but the whole thing, the original, never is. (By the way, I am assured that the same holds good in art and music. And the psychic, mental—if the brain is anything more than a transmitting agent in the matter—and physical aspects and connections of creative moods and their origins should form a most entertaining and possibly an instructive discussion.) And this is where my rebellious simile shoots off at a tangent from its former parallel. As a book is an elongated expression of a passing mood—a lengthy fabric, say, of an individualist pattern and set of colours, into which certain experiences, physical and mental, are woven—and as no such mood is repeated with any degree of exactness ; then, if it be a true one and caught at the right moment, it is that entirely new way to the goal which can't be found to Rome after a dozen or more journeys. And the same holds good even if the human agent has, so to write, been there

a hundred times before. And if he, or she, had—how awful ! Fancy being the perpetrator of a hundred books ! Imagination staggers at such an unspeakable enormity ! You mutter : “ Factory,” get a sense of oil, whirring machinery, and collapse.

But is it a true mood, the mood ? Does it give the one, right atmosphere to clothe the subject ? Only the God-given intuition of the genius, or the faith of the momentarily inspired, can tell that. And alas that so few are chosen out of the many who are called ! Ninety per cent. of us can't pick the true from the false ; so I come back to the query : How shall one begin to write his book ? The methods are about as many as the denominational ways to Heaven—or to that Hereafter which is Heaven, whatever the spelling may be.

There is the manner historical, either of place, persons, or both, in which you proceed leisurely (like the independent salesman who knows the value of the good article on which he has just put a fair price) to paint in every line, light and shade of your locale, your personnel, and how they came to be who and what they are—on the page. On the other side of the board, as it were, you have the slap-dash method of flouting the unwritten laws of literature by leading off with some arresting morsel of personality—words, actions, or both—which, according to

all the designs of logic and construction, should appear some further pages on in the book, often even in the second chapter. As most men, some women and a portion of Macaulay's schoolboys are aware, this is done for the flagrant, and generally undisguisable, purpose of securing your reader's attention the instant he, or she, claps sight on your opening lines. Then, having gained your be-all by this old ruse, you proceed, maybe as leisurely as the more honest craftsman, or woman, to inform your reader of the byegone whys and wherefores of the situation—and often with but small attention to the fact that this method has landed you into the complicating niceties and reiterations of a past within a past.

There is also the mysterious beginning, in which you write a page or two of quasi-symbolism (possibly with your tongue in your cheek, and possibly with all faith in its honesty) that may have some subtle connection with the stars, the waters under the earth, a very nebulous Hereafter, or, more distantly, even with life or the book of which it forms the opening. But it doesn't matter whether your mysticism (call it what you please) has anything or nothing to do with one or all of these things, so be that you have interested the reader. Then, in direct opposition there is the chatty, good-fellowship sort of commencement, wherein you lead off with an ingenuously

artful appearance of taking him, or her, by the buttonhole (if one may do so with an unknown woman even in these days and on paper), leading the way to a cosy and secluded corner and there becoming genially confidential.

Another method is the slap-bang—different from the slap-dash in that it “speaks right on,” as the artful and designing Antony said he was doing, when he knew so well that he was doing nothing of the sort, and didn’t intend to. This is also different inasmuch as it is nothing if not virile—muscular, with the muscles all laid bare, or in bold alto-relievo; as though it were afraid that its force would be unnoticed if it didn’t shout from the house-tops, or keep up a great sky-advertisement: “Look, I am strong!” This method never sees that it throws away all the graces, the use of some of which would make its strength no less apparent, but all the more believable.

Not to make this dissertation a catalogue of the ways of beginning to write a book, I will turn aside to suggest that an atmosphere, suitable and continuous, cannot be had by setting off with dialogue. It was atmosphere that I meant in my opening question: In what manner shall one start out, so that from the beginning he creates the right atmosphere?—And has not some one said that atmosphere is the

individualism of literature? If not, then some big light ought to have said it. Well, this was my trouble: How, from a mass of notes, long and short, brief chapters and what not, shall I make a connected whole with a character—an atmosphere—of its own? Here I have an olla-podrida, a jumble of things—human, natural, active, speculative, etc.—how shall I fuse them into a piece? Finally I decided to let it go largely as it stood, merely lengthening a note here and one there as a link between two more complete pieces. In this I may be wrong, although it is on the side of the gods for truth and freshness. Be assured there are those who will say that the thing should have all been recast and rewritten; that my itinerary should have raked in the whole ship's company, and have made every man a separate embodiment of tragedy or humour, the latter preferred. Others of the critical will say other things, a hundred to one. But whether they do or not, my first purpose was to make a faithful record, use what incidents, etc., I could without hurt or offence. And being one who scorns either to try to paint the lily or to turn fact to fiction—in an effort of this sort—such as it is I offer it to you.

Yours sincerely,

J. E. P.

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"Unless literature is personal it has no stimulating value."

EDMUND GOSSE.



A WAR-TIME VOYAGE

CHAPTER I

The prescription: to sea again—Slaves of vagabondage—
Nature's greatest paradox—God's incompleted acme—
A begetter of visions—Odd thoughts.

AND so I must away to sea again. Those men (four of them) of stethoscopes, grave faces, and family secrets have said it, one after the other; have said that only the sea can save me, or rather make physical life once more worth living—per-adventure no U-boat comes with a possibility of making matters worse. However, the choice is mine, the chance about one in two thousand, and the end of it is on the lap of the gods, who are not always unkind. Desperate diseases are—but, as Hamlet said, the proverb is musty.

So I am to go back, say they, to my "second-nature element," to Swinburne's "mother of men," that mothered me as a white-faced boy, small for his years, "but full o' sheer devilment as a shark's mouth's full o' teeth," according to the first mate under whom I sailed. Yes, back to the greatest friend I have known, though none

other has used me so roughly withal. (Query, to be answered at leisure: Which are your best friends—those who handle you Spartan-like to your benefit, or they who treat you kindly to your desires?) Six to eight months on the open seas it must be, if possible ; but not on a liner—no, not where hotel-life is the order. It must be in a tramp—"back to nature, as near as sensibility will allow," say they, these tall-hatted men who have come in "to save the wreck" that has, metaphorically, been three times ashore since the war began, and who (the men, not the wreck) have now sternly put aside that years-old "medicine-habit."

I know not what has been written about vagabonds and vagabondage generally, that is apart from those who are recognised legally as such, actors and actresses not included. Nor can I reach any books to tell me; they are packed up, more snugly than I am packing together these comments on the change that is to be. But of this much I am convinced: Once a vagabond, legal or not, always a vagabond, either in mind or action.

You may settle down to the four walls of a house or set of rooms, in town or country, and make it lovable with your *lares* and *penates* and

garden; take an interest in things around you, human and otherwise; get a dog to run at your heels and a cat to lie on the hearthrug—yea, you may even have a singing-bird in a cage, pay income tax and house duty, read the newspaper every morning, and go to bed every night with your boots off, after the manner of all respectable (if not respected) and enfranchised citizens, and still there's a sense of emptiness somewhere.

You are conscious, very clearly so at times, that in these conventional arrangements of yours there is a hitch—a rough-patched link in the endless chain that should keep the machinery running smoothly. You sit down, perhaps, look into the matter, and realise that in fitting up for this new regime you have—to change the metaphor—left a room unfurnished. Plainly, in caging the half-wild animal (which will never be really tamed as some women would have him be) you have forgotten to allow him the occasional run, in that other element of his, which would have kept him in love with the new one, if only by preventing him from hungering too much for the old.

So run my thoughts—now that the verdict has been pronounced—as I look back to the has-beens, dwell humanly although unhealthily on

the hateful yet needful break up of the present, incidentally curse in my heart the feudal German savagery that has brought my country to this pass (it is curious how you think of other sufferers when your own pains, of body or soul, are insistent), then glance ahead to the long holiday to-be.

But *is* it to be, *will* it be, can I make it truly a holiday—this going back to the sea, men, and ships? The Sea, Nature's greatest paradox; at once the primeval and the ever-young; next to woman, and at times even more than woman, the most powerfully attractive, yet repellent, thing in the universe; a nurse and a health-maker such as this earth does not know; and at the same time the world's first, most formidable, elemental and direct destroyer of men; an apparent simplicity that is, in truth, a mystery so profound as to be almost equal to that of Life; a stupendous monotony that does not tire—except to those persons who are bores to themselves—because it is never the same from one day to another; the Universe's feminine half, sister to the hard, immovable earth, gentle as a loving woman to-day, to-morrow the most awful and tigerish thing in existence; a mother of men, who has called them and killed them, called them and killed them, again and again and again, from

the beginning of time, and will do so to the end, yet may never be denied.

And Men—a smaller, although in ways a more potent, paradox that followed the sea in the order of creation; the very summit of excellence, as we know it in practice, also the very pit of infamy and general rottenness that could accompany human intelligence; immortality in the most mortal of bodies; God's incompleated acme of created things, which Satan took in hand to finish in his own way.

And Ships—beauty, ugliness, and the heroic; romance and soulful suggestion well-nigh without limit, side by side with prosaicism and endless hints of darker things; security in that which is tragically puny and fragile compared with what it has to contend against; grace of curve and symmetry of outline cheek-by-jowl with the square, bluff, and tubby; the "winged argosy" of yesterday, too often, alas! the home of horrors; begetter of visions of the unknown, and still happily, though insufficiently, suggestive of romance to young minds.

Yes, such is the prescription of my friends the doctors. (I believe them to be my friends.) And I take it that they have allowed for those other ingredients—the vagaries of wind and weather,

good luck and ill fortune. As for U-boats: Most desperate diseases are said to be best attacked by desperate remedies. On shore here, where chimneys-pots, slates, and branches of trees come hurtling about in gales of wind, a slow physical death; out there a running of the blockade of life, with the chances about five in a thousand— $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.—against me.

Well, the body may be in a perilous state (it appears to be so mostly, whether we know it or not) and the mind petulant, but the hard training of youth and early manhood counts for something at all times. As a boy I went to sea for the gain of pleasure—the gain of movement, colour of life, adventure, satisfaction. During some twenty-five years I have now and then *tasted*, and often longed for, that on which I lived lustily a dozen years and not too contentedly for a shorter period. Now of necessity I must go back. Formerly a vagabond from choice, I now have to be one willy-nilly. “Sweet are the uses of adversity.”

Thus I lie and scribble and think; and to-morrow—. My mood changes, and I feel, as Macbeth said, “How many such to-morrows have lighted fools the way to dusty death!” But then, I reflect, he was not a kindly man; there-

fore he could not have been expected to say a nasty thing in a nice way. He was not of the tribe of Homer, for instance; or he, too, would have known of the Eumenides, and might have talked of future things being "on the knees of the gods." And as the gods are sometimes even generous, I will leave it at that.

CHAPTER II

Leaving port—Mysterious regulations—Making ready—
Down Channel—Cool bravery—Some of my shipmates
—The master: a brief view—Away: lightless.

MILLWALL DOCK, seven a.m., and typical November, early enough though it be in the month. (All the world, from Archangel to Yokahama, knows where Millwall Dock is. A carman in 'Frisco, a gharry-driver in Calcutta, or a taxi-man in Sydney would tell you in an instant where it is; and the first and third would just as readily undertake to get you there, if you guaranteed the fare.)

Muffled to my ears I walk and rest, walk and rest on this lower "bridge," which is no bridge, inasmuch as it bridges nothing—this wood-floored islet on the floating island of iron, which I am to share with the master "till the ship reaches a British harbour," unless it pleases me to leave her at an earlier date, peradventure no other agent comes in to shorten my voyage. And as I turn and turn about, looking from craft to craft and re-examining old familiar things, I try to bring back the sensations of the past in similar scenes.

Hopeless! Can weakness, the bitter accumulations of many adverse years, and a consequent feeling of impotence and something akin to despair, be put off suddenly for the assumption of youth, strength, and irresponsibility? No. And I halt to watch the pilot come aboard, red-faced, keen-eyed, and quiet. His great navy-blue coat is buttoned up against the raw air of this foggy morning.

After a few, low-spoken words with the master he goes on to the upper bridge. Now a queer, bubbling, choking-like noise issues from somewhere near the funnel. Then, blatant and imperative, the syren screams out hurriedly the tidings that we are moving towards the dock-gates. (Syren! Shades of Olympians, could anything have been more ill-named? The acme of sweetness in sound made to represent the very height of hideousness!) The only sign of war that we can see, hear, or think of for the time being is a cargo steamer here and there with a gun mounted aft.

The s.s. *Tramp* is "flying light," and two diminutive tug-boats manœuvre her to the lock-pit, saucy in their ability and perky in their movements—Cockneys in every sense and particular, the *gamins* of London's greatest highway. Here we see another evidence of war, men in

khaki doing sentry-go on each side of the lock-pit. More warnings are shrieked out to the river beyond. Then out we go, stern-first—superstitiously a most fatal thing to do in the old, wind-jammer-days. We are swung around by the tugs, and a sort of dithering begins to run through the vessel. She is moving under her own steam. The tugs drop off. Our tow-lines are hove-in by clanking, clattering, steam-spitting winches. One tug remains in attendance; the other turns about, flings out a snort from her hooter, and disappears in the fog—now thick fog, through which we creep down the river, screaming defiant, get-out-of-the-way notes as we go; whilst, to all visible and audible intents and purposes, our country is at peace with the world.

After changing pilots at Gravesend we leave the fog astern, away in the sunlight, for which happy chance we say a sailor's Amen and prepare for what may be.

The captain, on his way from upper bridge to cabin, lets out a cheery: "Well, Purser, what do you think of it now?" I make a suitable answer as he disappears, and Southend heaves in sight.

Very shortly we know that we are at war. Loud, insistent, and menacing comes the sound of great guns—really big ones, for their "Boom!

Boom—boom! Boom!” follow us well-down the Channel. We Britishers know where they are and what the firing means; so we take no heed. But the neutrals and the coloured men amongst us snap occasional glances of interrogation at each other—not of alarm, however. Sea-dogs, like ourselves, men whose calling has many a time compelled them to hobnob with death for days on end, they are not perceptibly affected by either the ominous booming or by the fact that it is pretty near to us—only a few miles away in the haze on our port beam. This draws my attention to them; and, as they come and go, I begin to study them more closely than I have done so far.

Mark, run my cogitations, these men are not of our make in politics, aspirations, ideals, traditions, and the various *et ceteras* that go to make up civilisation. They are of the so-called inarticulate class of mankind. But if they say little, they have probably all the more in their minds; little knowledge of the real circumstances around us is most likely making them all the more imaginative as to mines, sudden attacks of the enemy, and all the unwarned up-goings to Heaven or down-fallings to the other place—if such an one there be. Yet do they go about with anything in the nature of blanched cheeks or bated breaths? Not a whit.

They are at sea, doing seamen's work; and that is all I can see about them.

But there are other things that make us know of war being in progress—new, hampering, and mysterious regulations. In the old time when a ship had left her port of departure she was free to proceed wherever her master, depth of water, or hard blows would let her go. Now, however, here, there, or yonder—wherever the Admiralty directs—she must put down her “mud-hook,” by landsmen, amateur yachtsmen and others of the laity termed “casting the anchor.” And there she must stay till the allotted number of hours have gone by; then get under way again, proceed to So-and-so, anchor once more, and remain till the specified time comes to resume her voyage. Thus the wartime game goes on, until the danger-zone is past, and the good old packet is on the open seas out yonder, where no German flag flies to-day. This is what I am told, on my venturing a remark to the pilot about our going down Channel quickly if the weather holds good, with the result that a little of the sharp edge of this new-old experience is taken away, and again I curse official Germany in particular and non-official Germany in general for that it has been supine slave enough to allow itself to

be trained for forty years to become the stupendous cat's-paw of unlimited ambition and aggression.

My thoughts are diverted by the serving out of life-belts, the provisioning of the boats, and lowering the davits—which are patent ones—so that the boats will clear the “harbour”-decks and be all the more readily lowered if the gentlemanly enemy should make us one of his polite calls away down the coast yonder. During this I hear many light remarks amongst the men, especially from the black-whiskered, oath-laden English bosun, and a lazy-looking, training-ship youth, who appears to have emptied his clothes-bag on to himself in order to keep out the cold. (By the way, it is, I believe, a shore tradition that a bosun is always a good swearer. So I hasten to put it on record that I have known two who had but very few oaths, and one that never swore.)

Thus we plug away down Channel, against a freshening westerly breeze, and come to our first anchorage at sundown. We are one of a fair-sized fleet of tramps. A certain well-known shoal stretches east and west protectively on our seaward side; whilst ahead and astern patrol-boats and more formidable grey craft steam to and fro, shepherding us in from the cowardly enemy, who

refuses to meet his legitimate opponents and seeks only the defenceless.

Morning—at first dull-grey, misty, and portentous of bad weather; then clearer, as “Old Jamaica” climbs from the horizon astern; and, sticking up from the protective sand-bank, we see the foremast with lower top-sail- and t’gallant-sail-yards still across, of a fine full-rigger that struck here seventeen years ago. Also, on the further edge of the bank, a steamer that has “bumped” in the night and is now nearly high and dry; reminding us (As if we needed such reminders!) that this old, old sea has still her ancient methods of punishing those men who venture into her hidden ways, whether or not they be tyro-bunglers against her known and her secret laws, or initiated trespassers.

We were to have been ploughing away again by this time—where to eventually we know not, for we left under sealed orders, as all foreign-going craft seem to do now-a-days. But the patrol-boat keeps us anchored by her signal. Those grizzled men and hardened youths of the shallower seas (fishers by calling in peace-time) have not yet completed their sort of housemaid-business of the channel ahead—if you can imagine a

housemaid sweeping a floor of powder-kegs on their ends, with here and there one that has a percussion cap in its head.

At last the gateway is open and the sheep are liberated. At Deal the pilot leaves us with a cheery "Good-bye and good luck!" and the master takes charge, his face inscrutable.

St. Catherine's Point and lighthouse go by in a temporary splash of sunlight ; and I feel that if I went on to those harbour-decks the fascination of the passing water would pull me overboard. The doctors were right—I badly need some tempering. Portland Bill we leave frowning in shadow, our minds too much on the freshening wind and the chance U-boat to give a thought to the appropriate, menacing look of that bluff, inshore of which are "interned" so many men who have made such fearful leeway from their proper compass-course through life.

We pass some wreckage that tells its own tale—some hatches of an ocean vagabond like this of ours, an upturned boat, and some broken boards that appear to have come from a bulkhead in living quarters. The hint is enough, even without the master's nod at the wreckage, his smile of contempt and: "Damnable German work, Purser." I step inside to ascertain if my life-belt is as handy

as it may be, then return to the deck and make a closer study of my shipmates.

On shore I heard and read something of what Merchant Service men have done for the nation during the war. Their bravery in facing Germany's "frightfulness" was in all men's mouths—and women's too. And, indeed, some daring is needed to face sudden mines and torpedoes in heavy weather; especially when you haven't been reared to such abrupt transitions. For, mind you, that is different from having even ten minutes' grace to get your boats out, when the winds and seas are uncomfortable—very different. Then there is the raider out yonder in mid-Atlantic, in addition to the usual dangers of seafaring. So that in these thunderous times of war there are more percipitous comings and goings than were thought of in the dog-watches of the stately windjammers that have just about ceased to be—under the Red Ensign, that is. And to my mind medals should be given to men who are wounded in this business, also to all who put up a good fight, like that of the *Mactavish*, to whom be blessed memory ever more.

I call to mind—whilst watching the officers and men do their work, exactly as others did twenty-five years ago—that this daring was generally

spoken and written of with an astonishment that would have amazed any man who had been to sea. Well, that was—and is—perhaps as it should be. One half the world never can know how the other half lives. Therefore it is right that stay-at-homes should expend so much marvelling at what is commonplace to those who do their business on these great waters—yea, even in peace-time.

Right imagination and intuition are gifts—when they are not evils in disguise—to the few, not the privilege of the many; just as it is the prerogative of ignorance to contradict, or doubt in silence, according to the manners, or temperament, of the person. So I begin to ask myself what those dear wonderers would say if they could spend a week or two out here aboard such a tramp as this one—I mean in a tramp with a crew like ours, thirty-one, all told, two cats, and a dog: Scandinavians, who may have spoken truly as to their countries of origin; a Russian, with a suspicious habit of perceptibly pricking up his ears whenever anything is said in his presence concerning Germany; a Hollander, who rather looks the part he is playing. (He passes me at this moment, to take his “trick” at the wheel on the upper bridge, and I give him an extra, surreptitious scrutiny, and say to

myself: "Yes, I *think* he is honest." I am, not so much by training as by temperament, loth to cast doubt on any man.)

Then we have a Belgian-American with one of the most Teutonic heads ever seen outside caricatures of Hans Rhineland. (I am leaning on the after-rail of the bridge, looking down at his close-cropped, fair-haired, bullet-shaped head, as he peels potatoes for dinner. I understand it to be already known that the worst insult any one can fling at him is to call him a German; yet only an hour ago I made him start palpably and snatch a guilty look up at me, when I, seizing an opportune moment, said a few German words to him in a low, suggestive tone. It is true that he was six feet or so below me, was unaware of my presence, was preoccupied and alone.) Then there is a fussy young Spaniard; an Argentino of colour, much bone, little flesh, a cast in his left eye, and a slouching gait; also a Norfolk man, whose chief characteristics seem to be a queer, short, hurried, shuffling step, a shortage of inches, a round, flat face, and a tongue that will never get him into trouble.

Such is our "deck crowd." The pale devils of the vessel's Hades are about as diversified; but they have more colour amongst them, and one

big-limbed, big-headed, real black, who has signed himself as from Barbadoes, is already boasting that he is a directly descended prince in his own right. Yet this dazzling exaltedness of his does not prevent him from shouting dire woe to a lean and skinny African in the stokehold, if the latter persists in making his "dam 'ulla-balloo"—*i.e.* singing a Salvation hymn. So they laugh and chatter, whistle, sing, and condemn one another, as we go ploughing our way through the danger-zone, "while all the world wonders."

Of course, it is not for me to say how it is in the secret heart of the master. With him lies all the responsibility, care, and precaution; yet his face shows nothing unusual, distinctive though it is in itself. He has the kudos of any derring-do performed by his vessel or crew; but the worries of his station—if he takes it at all seriously—far outweigh all he gains in that manner. In effect, he stands aloof from all. This simile is not apt on every point, but the eagle must bear his loneliness, cold and sterile surroundings along with his grandeur and the envy of those who must inhabit lesser heights.

Our master is still considerably a stranger to me, but by certain indications—possibly too brief and pointless for the landsman to see—I

have already judged him to be a thorough sailor; a man to whom the ways of the sea are second nature, one quick in deduction, and too ready in initiation to be caught in a corner. He is a good talker, has a ready smile, a flow of sarcasm, and a big voice in command. But I have yet to learn the man himself. Up to the present I know, in addition to the foregone, that he has played the Christian to me. Without any to-do he has taken me into his own, half-sacred habitation, made room for me in his private cabin; whereas I should have found far more indifferent lodgement in a berth on the main-deck below us.

Of Start Point—a mile or two away on our star-board beam—I take a snapshot, not in defiance of the authorities who say that a poor, circumscribed civilian shall not now carry a camera anywhere about the South Coast, but as a farewell to England's white cliffs. For, as our movements still lie particularly in the hands of the Admiralty and in part on the lap of the gods, I am not aware that I shall get such another chance of pictorial good-bye to the land I love yet cannot help in its hour of need.

Eddystone goes by, an exclamation-note sentinel in granite. Mid-afternoon comes; and we

cannot reach a certain point at which our orders say we must be at sundown. So a sheltering bay is entered, in fine weather, and down goes the "mud-hook" again, with a clanking rattle that disturbs the Sabbath calm in which we can see people taking the air on the promenade of the town that gives the bay its name.

Daybreak again, and a fine one, for which mercy we are duly thankful. The dreaded Manacles are passed, then the Lizards, finally the Wolf four miles or so north of us, and we are out on the open sea, but not out of the danger zone. The strict look-out is now doubled, independent of a patrol boat's signal that "Submarines are about." The patrol steams down from his weather berth, asking who we are. He rounds our stern as a greyhound would that of a mastiff, and hangs on under the lee whilst we answer his question, also inform him, at his request, where we are from and whither bound. At this he lets us go and steams away to interrogate another vagrant of the seas, flying, as he goes, that warning as to submarines.

Once more it is mid-afternoon. We arrive at the appointed place; and with the real pleasure of anticipation I look forward to the renewal of an oceanic intimacy that has been held so long in

abeyance—an intimacy (if I may call it such) that cannot be had within five hundred miles of land, and not even then unless Nature has shaped you that way. Here, in a light, searching, northerly wind, we box about till evening. All the time the master is, with his two officers, on the bridge above, quiet, yet with his glasses playing almost continually about the face of the water. Every one is on the alert in this trial-time of half-speed and waiting, for which the powers that be are surely much to blame; because it is in such handicapped conditions that U-boats have their greatest advantages. However, work and general duties go as though there were no U-boats west of Heligoland, concerning the surrendering of which Lord Salisbury must have turned uneasily and often in his grave since August 1914.

At last we are away, on “our own”—away, with all the uncanny feeling of being outwardly lightless; a great black object throbbing through the dark night and the quiet waters, for not even a portlight is allowed to be seen; away into the freshening breeze, night, and peace; into the monotony of watch and watch, and the hard mothering of the great, man-making, insatiable seas that will assuredly be about us before many days have gone by—submarines allowed for—

because the month is November, and we, in the words of the old chantey, only partially applicable here, "are bound to the west'ard, Where the stormy winds blow; She's a Liverpool packet; O God, let her go!"

CHAPTER III

A breeze—An unpleasant remark—Our packet—Retrospections and observations—Changes in the Merchant Service—Not war conditions—Lack of romance in youth to-day—Too much like America—Then and now—An interruption—Cogitations resumed—Another break.

NINE days out, five from the Scillies, and already we have passed through one Western Ocean gale of wind; and by all indications, barometric and natural, we are immediately in for another. I am, in fact, scratching this to the rhythm of its overture in the rigging, stays, etc., and to a roll of some twenty-odd degrees. (I have never before known a breeze to whistle so much amongst a vessel's "cordage"—as the standing and running-gear are poetically termed—like it does here; and for the life of me I cannot see why it should be so.) The light, northerly wind, with which we left land, soon became a strong nor'-wester, gave us a two days' hard blow, and has now chopped around to the sou'-west. Thus am I once more broken in to ways that had become rather memories than facts; and once more I go to table, the first time for many years, without feeling that I would prefer to go the other way.

But there is a price to pay for everything. A fly has been embedded in my balm of Gilead. To-night, in the cabin here, a remark was flung out that will sting for a long time to come, a remark that will prevent me from being at home in the vessel again. I knew, of course, that many masters do not like "owners' passengers"; but I did not expect to have it said in my presence that they are all so-so nuisances. Truly a man with a choleric temper, a spoilt child, and a gushing spring of water have much in common.

However, unpleasant things should ever be treated briefly; so I turn me to this packet that is rolling her harbour-decks under water, yet hardly takes even a spray on the upper-deck. She is what is called a "turret ship"—one of the ugliest things that ever came to sea, an abomination to the glory and beauty of sky and wave, and an abortion in that the commercial purpose of her sort was never attained. They were designed and built for the purpose of lessening the Suez Canal dues; but they didn't. The canal authorities were equal to the occasion. So, as a form of marine architecture, the "turret" ship is obsolete.

Yet she has grace, has this one that is doing her best to carry her crew, and me incidentally,

to Philadelphia. (Yes, it is out at last. After some days of rumours as to whether it was to be Baltimore, or the former port, we now know the truth. Though why on earth—or on sea rather—there was any secret about it I don't understand.) Lacking in all things that attract and compel the admiration of the eye, she has the grace that makes her loved of seamen—the grace to behave well in bad weather. In spite of three days of moderate gale, bow on, and fairly big seas running, so far she has not shipped a bucket of “green water”—*i.e.* nothing worse than sprays—on the upper deck. As for those “over-board” portions, as I term them (called the “harbour-decks,” and on which there are four hundred tons of gravel-ballast to steady her), on the port side and a little abaft the waist there is still a rough and worthless wooden stool that was there when we left the Thames.

Here I must make a rather unpleasant break, seeing that my present net is one that should take in all the fish that comes near. The master and I have been talking of the then and now of things under this Red Ensign of ours. We have seen a like number of years, and came to sea at about the same time as each other. He has been here all the time, however, seeing the game continu-

ously; despite which he agrees with my observations, saying: "How can you expect 'em to stand still in these days, when everything's moving?"

Life in our Merchant Service to-day is as different from what it was twenty-five years ago, as it was different then from what it had been in the days of "Coffin Ships" and the Liverpool packet "Rats"; and this holds notwithstanding what the war has brought about. In fact, fifty years have made more and greater changes in the life than the previous two hundred years had done.

In the "eighties" and "nineties" of the past century first and second officers were so numerous that dozens were to be found working on the dock-wharves of London, Liverpool, and other large ports. To-day, in spite of the number of vessels that have been sent to the bottom by German "frightfulness," mates, especially in tramps, are so scarce that a master has to put up with inefficiency (for every man with a certificate is not a competent officer) and to say little, and that little in a diplomatic manner; where formerly he said much, and that much generally in the way for which seamen have a long-standing, world-wide reputation. If he did otherwise he

would be pretty often short of officers, and in hot water with his owners because of delay for that reason. (In passing, it must be admitted that the same is true of engineers, because of the numbers of men that have gone to the making of munitions.)

It is nothing unusual now-a-days for a tramp officer or an engineer to turn about and say, when reprimanded, no matter how quietly, for some fault or other: "Oh, very well, sir, if you're not satisfied with me, pay me off in the next port." He knows quite well that, unless the port be an out-of-the-way one, he can easily and quickly ship again at higher wages (particularly if the next be an American port). At the same time, this also is a condition brought about by the war, which has sent Merchant Service rates of pay up from seventy-five to a hundred per cent. higher than ever they were before; and remember the extra cost of living is borne by the owner.

These are but simple facts, and not put down carpingly; but as plain truths compared to the truths of the past. In admiration of the war-time work of merchantmen as a whole I allow place to no man. To say that they are coming to sea, going home, and coming again—doing their work now as they did in times of peace—is, I think,

the highest praise that can be paid to any body of men. But this does not say that one may not point a moral without adorning the tale.

Independent of the war, however, in the life it is an established fact that a certain firm in London run two or three fine, full-rigged windjammers for the purpose of training youths who wish to become officers; also that these ships are subsidised more or less by all the big firms of liners. Still, despite the romance of sails, the youth of the nation holds back—that is the right class. In using windjammers to give them their first training there is some effort to make sailors of them; but it is more a case of playing on the romance in them, because as owners of sailing craft we are nowhere, nearly all of them having gone to other flags, particularly the deep-watermen.

With all its changes for the better, life under the Red Ensign does not draw them in sufficient numbers; it doesn't promise an adequate return in cash; it is not one of the callings by which a man can put enough aside to enable him to retire early—in middle life, say—and be a little more than comfortable from then onwards. The spirit of commercialism, just as it has so successfully

done in the United States,¹ has well-nigh throttled the spirit of romance in our male minds of sixteen years and upwards; and the more up-to-date schooling there has been prior to that age, the less romance there seems to me to be left—I mean strictly the romance of travel, adventure, discovery, and the like. And, one of the “old school” as I am, I look around this so-called “waste of waters,” up at the ragged, strength-giving grey over-head, take a glance at a couple of our “deck-hands,” and grieve for my country. For of a certainty her people are, at heart and in actual, personal occupation, becoming less and less maritime year by year.

¹ All there is in this book concerning the United States was written before that nation joined the war. It was not “set down in malice,” neither will it be erased in fear and insincere adulation. Such criticism as there is here should not hurt any healthy nature; and we know that the nature of the United States is as healthy as it is young. The observations are as much facts now as they were when they were written; therefore I see no reason to change them, any more than I see that either my publisher or any one else should be linked with them, or have the right to ask me to alter them. They are entirely personal and I alone am answerable for them. I am not on the war-path against the people of the United States. Some virtues of theirs would be advantages to any other nation; straightforwardness being one that can be commended to all, to ourselves no less than to any. But I have ever maintained that certain of their traits, or “features,” are (like so many of ours) fit subjects for satire. Here, however, there is no satire, only plain facts and opinions. Neither do I

As things go now it looks as if in the near by-and-bye we shall have to depend altogether on foreigners and coloured men to man our merchant craft, as Hannibal had to defeat the Romans—and failed. We may even have to descend to some of the low-down usages that America used to employ to encourage desertion from foreign vessels, in order to augment her own meagre personnel in vessels that flew the Star-spangled Banner. For American youths, far less than our own, steadily refuse to be “rocked in the cradle of the deep.” In a land where the main gospel has so long been one of dollars, young men

owe the people of the United States any grudge for that they did not force the hands of their governors and come in at first to do their righteous share against the general devilism of Germany. For their energy in a great cause one can only give all praise. Yet how could they have done less and still have been American? Is not the name synonymous of energy? Personally—like ninety per cent. of my countrymen—I always did detest blatancy of any sort. And I venture to hold that a great nation (great in intellect and general morality, not in mileage and money) does not shout over a hundred and one small successes of daily life; but does even great things in a quiet way. I bow to no one in my admiration of what America is now doing, and every vestige of honour be unto her for the really great thing she is doing in a quiet way. They have also the saving sense of satirical humour, one instance of which delights me. I refer to the Washington report that the United States War Department has decided that their “conscientious objectors” are not to do any fighting, nor even to act as a transit corps, but to come to Europe as the gravediggers of the army.

naturally prefer a home where money can be made, to any home on the rolling deep, however comfortable, easy-going, and well-provisioned it may be.

Besides, the American people, as a whole, look down on those who take to a sea-life as being inferior sort of men. With them our old-time joke of "the fool of the family being sent to sea" has found a new lease of life, with these changes: They take it very seriously, and say he has "gone" to sea. Perhaps that is why the personnel of the United States Navy has been, in addition to its Merchant Service, so largely made up of foreigners.

But our ship-board differences between now and twenty-five years ago are more marked in the conditions of sailors and firemen than they are in the officers; and in these matters, whereof I am now writing, the war has made no change. I am not one to say that there was no need for any of these changes. Old "Shellback" as I am, or was, one who has sailed and steamed both before and abaft the mast, I know the half-secret, and often open, brutal horrors of the prison-house that was. I also know that discipline and efficiency are sadly lacking to-day, and that if they were insisted on, as they were in my time, half the vessels under the Red Ensign would be

laid up for want of crews. Socialism appears to have come to sea; and the sooner the interloping agitator is wrecked and gone to the bottom, the better it will be for our Merchant Service—also the sooner I shall be pleased.

In the old days it was wrong to keep men working seven days a week, at sea and in harbour—as I have experienced. But “what a change, my countrymen,” from that to giving the “deck-hands” complete rest (except from the wheel and look-out) from Saturday noon to Monday-morning, and being afraid to ask them even to sweep the decks in the interval, lest the request should cause trouble!

We all know that a change in food—not so much in kind as in quality—was desirable, highly desirable. (I was one who agitated, in the Press, for the change.) But have the jam and condensed milk, the potatoes, turnips, and other vegetables, the condiments, pickles, fresh meat, and soft bread, given satisfaction, improved the beneficiaries, or brought a better class of men to sea? No, sirs—neither the one nor the other. Just as the old fare of “salt horse, hard tack, an’ pea soup” was not good enough, so the “soft tack” of to-day is, as a whole, the cause of grumbling. Already I have seen mess-kids (large, deep, tin

dishes in which the men's meals are served out) of excellent food thrown down the ash-shoots; have heard firemen and so-called sailors going cursing from the galley doorway; and also seen a deputation of malcontents grumbling to the steward because they had not "something better for tea." What they had was "hot-pot," which, along with "rice and curry," formed one of the dishes of the cabin tea. (Perhaps I should say that tea in the Merchant Service is really a five to six o'clock supper, therefore a substantial meal.)

(I am scribbling these observations in a notebook, whilst walking to and fro, to get the breeze and keep warm, on the leeseide of our islet; and here the master comes out, sees my occupation, and says: "Taking notes?" I tell him what I am doing, and we fall to a discussion of the subject. His advice is to leave it out of my itinerary for the present—"till the war's over. Remember, the world has a sweet tooth in the matter of truth—it likes only the sugary sort; and it won't like you for giving it an unsweetened cup, when it's having to drink so much that's bitter." This pulls us aside to talk of popularity. He has a fine sense of deduction, has read much, although not always of the best. I get more advice, say I have never sought popularity at the

expense of truth and never will. Whereat he delivers another *obiter dictum*, as he goes to the upper bridge, and I resume my observations, thus:)

The softening of rigours has led to a lessening of *morale* and of discipline; and wherever the latter decreases, so does efficiency—at sea, at any-rate. The pendulum, too long one-sided, has now swung too far the other way. For tough human fibre and rather frequent brutalism we have brought in a sort of emasculated seamanhood, in which effeminacy is not altogether absent, albeit it still gets drunk as soon as it arrives in harbour.

In the old days, when it was virile and wicked, it also got drunk and tried to paint the town red. But it paid for doing so, as every man should when he goes on the loose and neglects his work. In these times of degeneracy afloat, however, a man may be ashore, drinking instead of being at work; and if he is logged for doing so, especially in an American port, he just “ jumps ” the vessel and goes elsewhere for more money, providing that he doesn’t leave too much behind in shape of undrawn wages. Meanwhile the master has to pay nearly twice the man’s wages to get another in his place.

As for telling a man at sea that he is inefficient, or lazy, or is not sick when he lays up because he has stomach-ache or has tapped his finger with a hammer—well, the only result of such temerity and want of tact is to have the man say: “All rite, pay me off, then”; or to make him keep to his bunk for the remainder of the passage, and threaten all the time to “go to the consul,” who will “protect” him. And all this for £7 to £9 a month, good quarters, and plenty of excellent food.

Nor does he even say “sir” generally when he speaks to an officer or to the master—no, not if he is a “white” man. That is now-a-days left to coloured men; it would be too much of a concession on the part of a “white” seaman—seaman? No, ocean-labourer, I mean. Sailors are sea-curiosities in these times of incapableness, socialism, and Jack being not merely as good as his master, but about a cask of pork better.

I do not say, however, that all are inefficient, nor even that fifty per cent. are so. But I am certain that where inefficiency was rare at sea here it is now common; also that socialism has made for the gutting of discipline, has put emasculated evils into the places of virile ones. Of course, I am writing particularly of *tramp* life,

where most of the hands are foreigners and coloured men. And so far as my recent gleanings and observations have carried me in this new study of an old subject, I cannot see that the war has really much to do with these deplorable changes—only to this extent: The majority of able British seamen are now in the great fleet of transports, patrol boats, and hospital ships.

Again the even tenor of my unpleasant cogitations is interrupted, this time by an appeal to the Old Man for fairness. There is an eruption of strong words, broken sentences, contradiction, and blubbing from the deck below. When the tangle is somewhat unravelled it appears that the lazy training-ship youth—down as an A.B. at £7 10s. a month—has been giving the black-whiskered bosun some “old buck” (also called “chin music,” “back answers,” etc.), for which reason the bosun has “cuffed his ear’ole a bit.” He weeps afresh and says he has been “pummelled and kicked.” I note that the bosun is wearing soft rubber boots. The master acts diplomatically, blames both sides, tells them to behave themselves, and sends them back to work. The petty officer, however, is called up again and cautioned about keeping his “hands quiet aboard *this* packet.” He promises obedience and departs. I

turn back to my notes, decide that sufficient for the day is the unpleasantness thereof; at the same time I feel glad that it is said and done with, and on to the upper bridge I go to smoke a pipe behind the dodger and talk with the amiable young officer of the watch.

CHAPTER IV

Captain Dash, after some study—A “*cat-astrophe*”—Writing in a 22-degree roll—A startler—Trouble in the bathroom—An unwelcome “joke”—A black night and a tremendous sea—A phenomenal roll—Hove-to—Next morning, some ballast gone, but weather finer—Query: Bermuda?—Misapplied satire—Ocean-borne literature—A delightful “company.”

I HAVE said already that our master has a habit of delivering himself of unpremeditated sort of *obiter dicta*. In fact, two or three of his pronouncements have been put into the preceding pages, and more will be used, *if possible*. I must explain these two words. In addition to his fairly wide reading and an unusual grasp of what is often termed “men and things,” he is one of the finest *raconteurs* I have met. (Of course, all sailors are not of the bluff, hearty, and elementary type of men that does duty for them in the public mind. Quite a few of them, as the saying goes, are ordinarily cute men of the world, and some of them are even cute enough to be rogues.)

To a ready flow of words, a bent for humour, and a generally correct sizing up of the event, situation, or person, our master adds such a sense

of satire that he often sees fun in what hurts another. More, he has seen a variety of life afloat and ashore, has considerable acumen and information, has given some study to the ways of men who live by trade or other forms of advertisement, and has a fund of memories about men and women whom he has met, especially in his native place (a small town in Devon). Last, he sees no public man, and only one successful one, through any sort of rose-coloured glasses. Thus it goes without saying that he can be, and often is, the satire and lack of faith notwithstanding, as entertaining a man as one need wish for, even to cross the Atlantic with in winter, and that is as great a compliment as any self-respecting man likes to pay.

Well, it so happens (And this is where Fortune once more makes me her butt. Tyche was ever a too satirical jade!) that I have stirred in him the idea of setting his life down in a book. If he does, and makes it as interesting as the yarns he spins and the characters he sketches, it will be as rare and fine a thing as the English press has seen these many years, even though it be short of the milk of human kindness. It is this idea that robs me—no, I can't be robbed of what I never possessed, as the blind boy said of the sight that had

never been his; no, it prevents me from using—from adorning, embellishing even, my poor flat pages with some of his tales.

But I may use such of his odds and ends of opinion as come trippingly and pithily to life, providing that the source is acknowledged (He doesn't understand the nice honour of the creative worker, so I say no more than, "Oh, of course."), and that he doesn't remember them when I afterwards tell him of them.

Talk about that eternal she, of the yashmak and the sweetmeats, who spun her verbal fancies through a thousand and one nights to the caliph—tut, she is like the patent medicine that gets the whole of the market by a lavish expenditure in printer's ink "testimonials" and phrases that catch and hold with "the fool many." Not all the beauties of the front row have all the loveliness of their sex.

I don't know, at the moment, whether or not this is one of his unconsidered trifles. We are heaving along through another nor'-west gale; and I am holding on, port and starboard, to the fixed table, jotting down a thought as often as it is safe to let go with my right hand. So I can't agree to be held guilty of any plagiarism that I may commit under such circumstances as these.

Besides, this delicate, Bohemian glass sort of health of mine has got another crack somehow, or what seems to be a crack. So I am rather reckless of consequences, and somewhat peevish with the weather and things generally into the bargain.

(Here, because of my forgetting to record the event at its proper time and place, I must interrupt the rough tenor of my itinerary to say that a day or two after we left the "danger zone" cat number one disappeared. She was a young tabby that played engagingly about the decks with the equally young dog, and made her home in the dining-saloon. Questions were asked. A search was made. Her absence was proved, and the query stood on most tongues: Who threw the cat overboard? No one seemed to have owed it any ill-will; therefore its disappearance was, and is, a mystery. Having known serious trouble to come out of such an incident, I waited, watched, and listened; but nothing particular happened further in the matter.

(Then, somewhere about the tail-end of the gale before this one, number two was found to be missing. Now this was a black one that lived with the engineers in a detached "house" on the big island abaft our islet. What I mean is that

Blacky dwelt apart from the crowd, elevated, isolated, and, I understand, was hardly ever seen away from her select neighbourhood. [I never saw the cat.] Then, lo! colour began to tell, as it does always and everywhere. Here and there I heard murmurs, mostly of an indirect nature, that bad luck would be sure to come of it; we could not lose two cats and go through a passage, especially a North Atlantic winter passage, without something happening. "Besides, this was a black un." And not a few were the open or covert threats of what would occur to the perpetrator of the deed if his identity should be discovered. It appeared to me that the whole crew resented the loss of the cat, the Old Man alone excepted, who merely said, "It's a *cat*-astrophe." But then, how often does the wrong-doer try to cover up his tracks by opinions that are contrary to his actions! Amongst the prophets of trouble were some of the "after-guard," both of on deck and below; and although they spoke in a pretendedly light way, it seemed to me for the most part that there was a palpable weight dragging at the heels of the lightness. "Superstition dies hard," quoted I to myself. Not that the master was one of these—Oh, no! He is made of sterner, more up-to-date stuff.—Stay! Lest I do

a sort of dishonour to the softer and more humane side of him, let me hasten to say that if he is not of sterner stuff, he has such histrionic talent as to deceive even so close and seasoned a student of humanity as I.)

So much for the past tense of the cat affair. Now I can return to things as they are—that is where they are not as they were ten seconds ago, and will not be ten seconds ahead. As to this matter of holding on whilst the writing fit is at work, I might disburden myself of two thoughts, in place of one, by getting in an extra turn whenever this dear, old, iron (or steel, I don't know which; but I beg her pardon, in any case) "foundry" ¹ rolls to left—to starboard, that is, as I'm sitting with my back for'ard—only I cannot write with my left hand. Thus, because of this phenomenal rolling (A light ship, please remember, in justice; and we have come suddenly into big seas), the necessity of having a grip on both sides, and the inconsiderateness of the literary mood coming tyrannically on one at such a time, I am losing one thought out of every two. Not that they are of such transcendent——

Bang! I am literally jumped up from my seat, and dropped again as abruptly. She dithers,

¹ A steamer seaman's term.

shivers, trembles, and nearly stops. The vibration runs through her from head to stern. You can feel her pausing, and almost imagine her wondering, rather fearfully, if she may try again. If you didn't know the meaning of it, you might, according to your temperament, become panicky and rush on deck. It feels as if a big shell has hit us somewhere, but not exploded. In reality it is merely what happens every now and then to a light steamer that is more or less head-on in a gale of wind—*i.e.* the old lady brought her forefoot down on a sea. The danger is that she may thus start sufficient rivets as to cause a leak. After such a passage as this some vessels have had to be dry-docked and have as many as four to five hundred rivets renewed.

However, the *Tramp* is nosing it again, in her patient, painful, get-there-some-day sort of way; and I would change to the settee on the starboard side of the table (There isn't one on the port side; and a movable seat now would be a moving one all the time), be in a position to do more holding on with my feet, and so go naturally to and fro with the heaving of this "foundry" that has become feminine; but again I can't. We have had to pack that settee hurriedly with the magazines, periodicals of other sorts, and the small

nautical library that usually litters table and settees, and with all the other movable *et cetera* of the cabin. Bang!—clatter, scutter—whirrrr! Something's broken lose in the bathroom. . . .

I have been to correct the trouble—a wooden pail in which I had deposited my toilet, shaving, and other gear, from their shelves and pigeon-holes. It must have thought itself a tramp, like this old dear under my feet, for it seemed suddenly to have been given sensibility, satire, and action. It was scooting, port and starboard, across the tiled floor, unshipping a part of its cargo here and a part there—my razors and toothbrush into a pair of the Old Man's slippers, my bottle of shampoo liquid running to waste on a little pile of manilla yarn (As if my hair were anything like that! This was the deepest cut of all), and other things landed in places almost as likely.

Having re-stowed the oddments, put away my notebook in rather peevish disgust, and struggled into a heavy coat, I am going on deck—wondering why this North Atlantic will persist in being so German-like in winter-time to a poor beggar of a semi-invalid. If age counted for anything beyond accumulated experiences—most of them pointless in the matter of proper effect—and dislike of change, it would surely know better.

* * * * *

Next morning: I must write in the past tense again.

At the lee fore-corner of our "house" (*i.e.* the master's apartments on this islet, whereof I am temporarily a lodger—the man in the steerage, I put it, with a foolish attempt to be jocular) I ran into some one; or, rather, a bigger and heavier frame than mine knocked me violently aside in the darkness—to which my eyes were still unaccustomed—and a larger, more blustering voice than mine said quite gaily: "Hello, Purser, mind your helm in these narrow seas!"

Of course, it was the master; for no other person in this packet has a voice comparable to his, except the engineers' steward, a youth, who never comes here, and would not, I think, have spoken so. Captain Dash was in soft, rubber boots, perambulating the lower bridge; which, as I may have said already, is not a bridge.

He had possibly been studying the weather. I write "possibly" because he is not one who needs to *study* that. So much is he a sailor, so right in intuition and quick in deduction in most things that are of the daily round, the common task of his calling, that a glance at the barometer and another at the heavens and the sea, and he

knows the situation as well as he, or any other man, would know it after an hour's study.

So I write "possibly," and add in the same way that he might have been taking quiet communion with himself on his store of those things which so many of us accumulate yet never talk about; also that he had perhaps been dwelling on the petty ills and frictions of the time, situation, ship-board management, etc. For we know with some men "light cares speak, when mighty griefs are dumb"; and if our master has a weakness (And what man shall say that he himself has none?) it is to let the little troubles of his place speak too loud.

However, after a few obvious remarks he went on to the upper bridge, leaving me to my thoughts, the darkness, the rolling, and the weather. I was glad at this, not being inclined to talk. Truth to tell, being not a little out of sorts at the time, I rather resented that needless collision, and the manner of it, at the corner of the house. But, then, some men will be boys now and then in their jokes so long as they are able to joke; and, on the whole, well it is for them and others that such is the case. Being only a smallish man, and in a precarious state of health, the bump had given me a sort of shock. But the main point in the

matter is that the "joke" is a good individual trait, one of those traits that, in the aggregate, form a character.

I worked my way to wind'ard, starboard side, a rather slow process. I could not say that the gale was really heavy, about force eight and a half, or perhaps nine. I have been in much heavier gales; but the seas were truly big, and the night—in the phrase of a bosun, whom I shall never forget, it was "black as the Earl of 'Ell's weskit." All that I could see beyond the hatch immediately for'ard and the foremast, and then only in a blurred way, were the great, white heads of the seas, as they thundered down on us, and the vessel's head, off and on, in a smother of foam. How, in the name of all that was lucky, she kept from taking a big roller aboard I did not, and never shall, profess to understand. As it was, all that the seas did was to crash on to the harbour-deck, send over a drenching cloud of spray high as the foremast-head (as I had witnessed on another occasion in the day-time), and go seething and roaring along aft. It was a stupendous sight narrowed into small compass, and awesome, I had no doubt, to any one who had not seen the like before.

The weight of the gale has crossed our head,

and this is its sort of aftermath, I said to myself; because the wind always travels so much faster than the sea it raises. With this, having had enough of the weather-side, I went around to leeward; feeling that if the cure which the doctors had ordered was of a Spartan nature, it was, at any-rate, the right one. Already I had benefited so much that both dyspepsia and neuralgia of some ten years' standing were but intermittent and anæmic ghosts of their former persistent and sturdy selves.

Hardly had I reached the leeside of the house, when the vessel rolled that way until it seemed as if she would turn turtle. For a good minute or more—a long time in such a situation—I held my breath and waited. Then up she came again, slowly; but she came up, and that was everything. No sooner was she fairly righted and nosing it once more, than the engines stopped. Captain Dash had laid her to. Knowing his packet, as a sailor should know the vessel he commands, he knew what was best for her when it came to rolling of that sort. “And there she lay,” wallowing, but much more comfortably than before, and with no more mighty bangs at her forefoot.

We have considerably less wind; therefore the seas are not so lively as they were last night, but they have not gone down perceptibly. For this latter reason we are still lying-to, thus saving coal, because the *Tramp* could no more make headway now than she did in the thick of it yester-evening. I see that some of the ballast and planks are gone from the port harbour-deck, carried away in the great roll last night.

The sky is also still overcast, so that no "sight" (a sextant "sight" of the sun) has been taken this morning. This is rather a pity, the same having held for some days past now. However, the glass is rising, and not too fast, I am pleased to note. This is the sixth gale of wind we have had since we left land on that cold, clear evening in November; and if the barometer went up too quickly it might mean that we should get another strong breeze pretty soon. And twenty days of alternating sou'west and nor'west moderate gales, and in such close quarters and limited company, too, are, I think, quite a full dose of the prescription that I was ordered to take.

But I must not complain. In addition to being now able to find some pleasure in eating, I can sleep for a few hours at once without opiates, and that even in spite of the steady "sentry-go" of

the officer on the bridge not more than two feet above my head. Hence, ye dyspeptics, ye poor souls who are racked with neuralgia, unable to sleep, and eaten up with worries great and small, come out here on a tramp voyage in winter; come and get the Draconian cure, let Nature's active savagery make men of you again.

The master comes in to cut up a pipe of tobacco. He has been conferring with "The Chief" (always the ship-board appellation of a chief engineer) and tells me that another delaying gale will compel him to go into Bermuda for coal. We have only just enough to carry us to Philadelphia at our ordinary pace of about eight and a half knots per hour. To me, as a passenger—hiding the fact under an appearance on the Ship's Articles as purser at a shilling a month—there is pleasure in the thought of going to Bermuda; but for his and our owners' sakes I am sorry. I tell him so, with some stress on the latter, for I stand much indebted to those same owners. His reply is a fragment of that satirical, shouldering-off laugh of his, a sort of harsh:

"Talk is cheap, but you have to pay for whisky; but it all comes out in the wash," and on deck he goes again, leaving me wondering if there is such a thing as transmigration of souls.

For it is so easy to think of him as a master-satyr from some ancient Greek wood, one who looked out on the world, poked fun at its tender places, then laughed at the pain he caused. I say "master" because it is difficult to think of him in any subordinate position.

With his disappearance I, having had my morning recreation, turn to find something to read in the higgledypiggledy assortment on the star-board settee. With the exception of such things as epitomes of navigation, nautical tables, manuals of compass adjustment, and what-not, sailing directions, *Laws of Storms*, *The Ship-Master's Guide to the Medicine Chest*, and other compilations of sea lore, the only literature that we have consists of Captain Dash's bundle of magazines, grave and gay, and some contemporary examples of light fiction that I brought, the most of which are now looked on as past things. (I was forbidden to bring anything else; but I didn't obey the order.) Stay!—I err, as I have been doing all my life, apparently, or I should be situated differently from what I am. I was forgetting to mention these illimitable books of sea and sky (the latter is now clearing, blue and hopefully), and the poor yet often unanswerable commentaries that they raise in one's mind.

However, I am lucky enough to discover, under one of the seats, Sir Conan Doyle's *White Company*—a cheap, American issue with a *woman of to-day on the paper cover*. Oh, those Americans! But this fearful, horrid, exasperating anachronism doesn't spoil my delight in big Jock of Hurdle, the little, white-haired knight (in whom I don't quite believe, all the same), the young, unsophisticated "clerk," and all that make up the personnel of a rattling good tale with an atmosphere that makes me believe it to be the real thing.

CHAPTER V

To believe or not believe—Disruptions aboard—A Señor—
A significant fact—Keeping out of trouble—An interruption—The “ Prince ” again—Undeserved tolerance—
“ The Duke of Ber-mondsey ”—A “ hero ” and his degradation to-be.

THIS is not a trouble-ship, any more than any other under the Red Ensign; yet we are having trouble, and I fear that we shall have more of it as time goes by. On her previous voyage of sixteen months all was peace and good-fellowship—so I am told; and it is not my habit to disbelieve what I hear and may be true. Besides, I always remember that, however wide one's experience may be, it can never be more than as a drop in the ocean. Now our master works on the rule of believing no man off-hand and seldom afterwards. He is an astute man of the world, one whose dealings with it have been varied, at home and abroad, and who says: “ I'm a bit of a liar myself, and believe every man's a better hand at it than I am.” It may be a good rule; I don't know, so I should not like to follow it. However, this is an interpolation—quite so, except that I wish to set down, so far as I may

decorously, some of the complexities of one of the most interesting men I have met. In fact, he is a man whose personality could carry easily a big, strong novel, no matter what the locale or the *milieu* were.

But I began to write of the little troubles we are having, apart from the bad weather that is still delaying us. These are amongst the men. It were ever so; and, I suppose, ever will be, so long as elementary men are grouped together in narrow quarters and subjected to the frictions that come of mutual work, especially when they are of varying nationalities. Go outside any shipping office in the United Kingdom, take a Briarean armful of the masculine specimens that you find there, put them into a ship's forecastle, and, a hundred to one, you will have fights in which fists are not always the only weapons used.

I have said that there is a Spaniard amongst the deck-hands. He is a lithe, young, bright-faced fellow, energetic and, so far as I can see, a good and cheerful worker, which last virtue is ever held to be a satisfactory cover to a multitude of sins aboard ship. He and the bosun are at loggerheads. We hear of blows having been struck, of the Barcelonian having got the worse of it and having then produced, but not used,

his knife. I think, however, that it is a case of much smoke and little fire. If it had come to serious fisticuffs, anything beyond a momentary scrimmage, our black-whiskered, thick-set Cornishman could, and probably would, have made short work of the younger man; who puts on certain airs, if not graces, from the fact that he was one of the crew on the previous voyage, and is favoured by such of our officers as were here then. I write "probably" of the bosun, because I read him to have a fair share of his countymen's usual policy of bluff and bluster.

At any-rate the Señor (Oh, he carries himself with the customary pride, if not the traditional arrogance, of Castile!—or was it Aragon that had the more? I don't know; but the superficial evidence would appear to be in favour of the latter province.) has undoubtedly addressed a threat of knife-work to an apprentice, for the sole reason that the youth, in mere historic keeping with the habits of his tribe, is difficult to awake, often goes to sleep again after he is called, and comes tumbling on deck, rubbing his eyes open, five minutes or so after the bell has been struck. I should explain that the apprentice is taking a watch-and-watch "trick" at the wheel; thus he has sometimes to relieve

an A.B. when he turns out. This is because one deck-hand is trimming coal, in consequence of our coming away short of a trimmer.

Another thing, and one that is, I think, rather significant, the store-room for'ard has been broken open in the night, and the two pairs of handcuffs (familiarly known as "irons") which were kept there, have disappeared. Rumour (that run-agate jade who is no more to be believed aboard-ship than she is ashore) has it that they have been thrown over the side. But who knows this to be a fact? If any one, how came he to know it? And why doesn't he out with the whole story?—etc. There the matter has to remain; for our master hates to be bothered with these small items of governance. Neither is the chief officer a seeker of trouble; they are both averse to stirring up what may prove to be, in the former's phrase, "a smell that may become a stink if you meddle with it." And perhaps they are right. Who shall say? It is, at least, a vein of philosophy that nine-tenths of civilisation considers happily to be good enough for daily wear and comfort. Only there is, and will ever be, the necessity to discriminate; and that is where blessed wisdom (which so few of us are said to possess) comes in—or stays out.

Here the master comes around the lee-corner of the house, looks across at me, and I say to myself, in the words of Macbeth's pushful wife: "My thane, thy face is full of speech."

Later: Yes, it was full. He has been reading one of my novels, and he wanted to argue as to whether it is better—for the public—that a writer should lose his literary soul—*i.e.* conscience—and gain the world by giving it the feeble or worse things that it wants, or keep his soul and lose the world by offering it what he thinks it ought to have. Thus we began another of our fate-deciding discussions, which was cut short by The Chief coming to say something unpleasant about the coal. This has taken Captain Dash away; so I turn back to my subject.

However, not to give the smiling Spaniard all the limelight (I am watching him at work, as I make my notes on the after, the unfrequented, part of our islet. And how easy it is to see what an exasperating, smiling, black-eyed quantity of "swank" he can be!), there is trouble amongst the blacks of the hot deeps that carry us along. It seems that the Prince is bearing rather heavily on his blood royal. He holds that by virtue of his descent he has the right to be the first at the mess-kids when he is there, and that

the best should be reserved for him when duty keeps him below. And as he is tall and hefty it seems that his wishes are somewhat complied with, though none too respectfully, from all accounts. (The only Britisher on that side of the forecastle is a poor, peace-loving specimen.) What I most see, or hear, rather, of his princeliness are his threats of dire punishment to the hymn-singing black, whenever he happens to be within reach of the other's gimlet-like falsetto aggravation. But it must be admitted that the singer—skinny and slight though he is, and seemingly always happy—"carries on" all the same.

By-the-way, the Prince has the unusual shipboard habit of coming direct to the master whenever he has a complaint to make, or has burnt or scalded himself and wants the wound dressed. Perhaps this is a part of his exalted rank. Naturally an eagle would not go to a crow if he had a case to present. Any other man on such occasions goes, according to custom, to The Chief, or, with any physical hurt, to the steward, who is usually doctor, dresser, and president-general of the medicine-chest aboard a tramp, whether she be large or small. On these visits his coloured highness (who boasts of having

“ a house at Hampstead,” with emphasis on the last word) begins respectfully enough with: “ Mo’nen, cap’n,” or “ Eb’nen, cap’n,” as the case may require, then goes on to say, “ I’s come to,” etc. And I notice that whilst Captain Dash is always amused by this fellow’s errands of petty trouble, he is commonly annoyed by the same from any other man, and sometimes so even when they are brought indirectly to him.

But there is another member of our crew who deserves some special mention. This is the second steward, known on board as “ the Duke of Bermondsey.” He is just under eighteen years of age, tall, strong, gingery, a good worker, a typical, illiterate Londoner—except perhaps in freedom of tongue—who would pass easily for twenty or twenty-two. Of manners he has none, none whatever; yet he is not offensively unman-nered. In the same way, without being aggressive, he has a certain lordliness of bearing and general out-look, hence the title, which he treats with becoming indifference. He is as short of clothes as the idle and disrespectful training-ship A.B. is well-supplied; and coming into the saloon at dinner-time, or whenever we are seated at table, with his ragged shirt-sleeves hanging loose, his arms dirty and a cap awry on his stubbly head

is just a matter-of-course. But, then, he is so really innocent about it all that one cannot be other than amused. This is his first voyage.

Add to this his story, told with the simplicity that convinces. He has been in the Army—London Fusiliers—was wounded in the back at Loos, and discharged, of no further service to his country. He is, of course, apart from the men. So I cannot say how he and his military history would fare in that levelling, democratic atmosphere where only muscular strength and seamanship tell; but from the officers, engineers, stewards and apprentices he gets a moiety of that respect which is due to all heroes of the war. Still, there is a worm at the kernel. The chief steward (a small, able, rather well-informed, fiery Hielan'man, who has to share his berth with the Duke) complains that the latter is not only more of a hindrance than a help; but he is—well somewhat in the same bodily condition as we hear of the men being in the trenches, and that unless “his Grace” is moved to some other scene of action, especially in the matter of sleeping, he (the Hielan'man) will change his nightly habitat, even if he has to sleep in the pantry, or come on deck. Thus it is decided that our hero of Loos is to be degraded to the decks

on arrival in Philadelphia; whereat he, true to his personality, appears to be the least affected person aboard.

The master is returning. I pocket my book of notes, go around to the leese, meet him there, and am informed that "we must make Bermuda—haven't got forty-eight hours' coal left."

CHAPTER VI

A vain search—Oddments and a rumour—Bad weather and a native trait—A hope of better things—Away!—Some boatmen and me—A guide's information—An island "bus"—On the road—A genial cicerone—Bermudian details—Dollars, shillings and some personal expressions—A foolish error.

BERMUDA!—Fabled isle! At least I think some of its boasted charms must be fabled, according to what I remember to have heard of them. So run my thoughts as I search our nautical and miniature-general libraries for information of the place that looms up away our port bow. Orally I can learn nothing of it, on this rejuvenating morning of fine, warm weather. (We have been coming south, mainly, since the decision was made yesterday-afternoon. Besides, the island is right in the Gulf Stream.) Only an apprentice has been there before, and he did not land. Even The Chief is a stranger to the place; hence the phenomenon of his having no friends there. It is related that he has "friends" in every main port, and in many small ones, the world around. But, then, he is a much-travelled man of highly developed geniality.

All that I can find of the tiny country are dry details, such as: It is not an island, but an amalgamation of islets, over three hundred in number, and coral formed. Its length is something like eighteen miles and its maximum width is three. I can't give any exact figures; outside of statistics I don't like them. So, in disgust, I've thrown the *Sailing Directions*, *Whitaker's* and another compilation or two into a corner. What population it has goodness and statisticians alone know; and who that wonders cares? I desired some human sort of information. On the chart it is a long, lagoon-indented, pot-hook- or hanger-looking place, with scores of dots along its coasts and in its lagoons.

Early evening: We are lying in the Murray Anchorage, with other western-bound tramps in the same plight as ourselves, and at the opposite end of the island (I will persist in thinking of it as singular.) from the only harbour that has water enough for us. Short of being unable to go ashore—and of even more moment than that with some of us—our one great *desideratum* is war-news. But none is to be had. On the heights above there are great guns, in tourist guides, etc., commonly termed “frowning guns”; but, as I cannot see their “muzzles,” I don't know

whether they frown or not. All else that I can see of the place is particularly attractive, after twenty-five days of North Atlantic winter-weather.

Being now in quiet waters Captain Dash brings out his gramophone. The officers and The Chief are invited up, and from the machine we get a two hours' concert, a part of which—some Hawaiian songs and music—is really beautiful.

Morning: Our master has gone ashore to attend to his business of getting coal, and to what else I don't know; and as it is no business of mine, I don't let it bother my head. This concerns me more: Fore and aft it is said that we may be here some days before a lighter comes alongside. Where the rumour came from I am at a loss to know. Such yarns always go the round of a vessel at such a time; they usually spring from a member of the crew who has been to the place many years before, or from one who knew another man that had been there in the equally distant past, and in either case under exceptional circumstances. However, it is war-time, when all things are behind, and labour is short everywhere. Besides, there are apparently four steamers on turn before us. So, as the day does not promise to be of the best, I content myself as well as

possible at being confined aboard, when ordinarily I should be enjoying the variety of the shore yonder. One further cause of annoyance is that a week ago I broke the bridge-piece of my bi-phocal glasses; and, as Captain Dash knows quite well, I am anxious to have them repaired. It is a nuisance to have to change glasses every time you wish to look beyond a few feet from your face.

Two days have gone by, during which I have tried vainly to catch fish, taken a few snapshots, read; and, having the house to myself, I have done some writing, such as it is. Up to the present there is no sign of coal coming, neither has any come to the vessels on turn before us. One reason appears to be the weather. Yesterday we had a two hours' real hurricane of wind and rain. It was not a steady blow, but squally; and in the heights of it the water fairly smoked. In these we could not see the steamers lying at anchor near us. (By-the-way, one of them is a Greek; and the boatmen tell me that when he tried to put to sea, five days ago—after being told to remain till further orders—he was fired on, persisted in going on, was hit, and at once came back.) Since then until this afternoon the weather has been uncertain, and chilly in the evening and night. I hear

that the natives, white, black, and semi-coloured, even to the babes thereof, know some hours before-hand when one of these "blows" is coming. It is said to be born in them, like teething in children generally, and apple-stealing in English boys.

However, to-night promises a better day to-morrow. So most of the officers have given me commissions as to mementoes for their wives and sweethearts. Now I am turning in with the happy thought of a jaunt, and the possibility of a revival of the old-time feeling of irresponsible pleasure on a *terra incognita*—before much midnight oil, long unrequited effort, the petty jealousy of mediocrity—galling enough when it appears in print—the stupid indifference and the smug ignorance of "the fool many," the—— but enough. Cracked and chipped though the pitcher is, it may have less hard wear to go through than that in which it has proved its right to the term "hardware." Besides, look at the beauty of this night; strongly am I tempted to apostrophise its warm loveliness.

Morning again, and ideal. I am up early, dressed in my best (grey flannels, the nearest I have to sub-tropical, colonial wear) and away betimes in the long, narrow, royal-blue boat

that brought off our fresh meat for the day. Her lug-sail (set well-aft, because of the build of the boat) sends her dancing along over the already sun-warmed swell, brought up by two days of ill-conditioned weather. I am at the yoke-lines and find it advisable to humour her a little; I don't wish to go ashore with the finery drenched that I've donned in honour of the island and the occasion. To this end I suggest that the sheet of the sail be eased a little, a remark that subjects me to further scrutiny by the coal-black, flat-faced skipper and his three brown, better-looking helps. The former glances around, appears to take in the details of the situation, looks at me again, and says condescendingly yet quite amiably: "Yeah, sah, I tink yo' right. Yo' bin in boat befoah." He smiles at me, and adds, "Johnson, slack dat sheet, man."

The man obeys. We trip along more easily, and the four men watch me with more than usual interest in their fine eyes. To them I am a *rara avis*. Passengers are unknown to such scallywags of the ocean as our hard-weather *Tramp*. They know I'm not an officer, or I should not be going ashore, whilst the captain is there, and the vessel is at anchor. Besides, I'm not rigged as such, the ship considered. So the mystery remains, if it

doesn't deepen, and is probably put down as a by-product of the war.

According to instructions I steer into a tiny bay, or, rather, a boat harbour with a narrow entrance, three-quarters of the blue water of which are thick with Sargasso weed. I look down at the coral bottom, around at the darker rock-coral ashore, the whitish sand, cactus, palms, stray shrubs of a sort of laurel, and stunted, sprawling cedar trees, and (Oh, happy, foretime feeling come to life again!) once more I am as I was; youth is at the helm; the world still has untried places, and life has not lost all its warmth and romance.

Under the guidance of the darkest of the brown men (in bodily appearance like to our hymn-singing black, and attired much the same as *he* is when at work) I step into the shore heat, and we make a bee-line for the town of St. George's—over the sands, through a shady avenue of cedars, down what I am told is Turkey Hill (Where the shining black skin of the nearly naked youngsters and other details by the way make me regret the authoritative bar on cameras.), and along York Street. During this time I learn, amongst a number of less important, although equally interesting things, that I must go to Hamilton—twelve

miles away—to get my glasses mended; and that if I take a “carri’ge” (“as mos’ de white folk do”) it will cost me “’bout fifteen shillin’,” or “foh a good car’i’ge an’ two ho’ses an’ d’ive ’bout Hamilton one pound.” On the other hand, I can go and come back for three shillings!—“in de ’bus.”

Here we arrive at Market Square. My guide points to a canvas-covered waggonette across the square, says that is the “sheap price” vehicle, takes payment for his services, grins, and goes shuffling off bare-footed through the grey dust.

I gaze around in the early forenoon heat, at buildings, persons, the harbour that flanks one side of the square, etc. Now again I am back in the past, hearing echoes and seeing reminders of West Indian colonial life. I go across to the waggonette, and start to bespeak a seat. The only functionary is the driver, a young, well-favoured mulatto, who eyes me over with a certain sort of suspicion. Plainly he doesn’t expect me to sit inside, nor do I; but our reasons are different. My desire—not yet clearly expressed—is actuated by the heat within and the breeze without. His, however, as I soon begin to perceive, in between the lines and from past experi-

ences, is based on the mixing of colours, when one of them appears to be of a rather considerably higher status than the other. He is examining my rig-out closely, especially the fob-seal and grey gloves.

Meanwhile he is packing the front seat with all manner of small parcels, and to such a height that I begin to fear there won't be space left for me. He is evidently a regular carrier of more than human beings. Now I learn that the seat at his side has been bespoken by a "jen'l'man"; but if *he* doesn't object, and there is room enough for me, I also can sit up there. I thank him, look at the growing pile of parcels, feel more doubtful than before, and turn to see how it fares within.

The two sides are nearly full of colour, black, brownish, and the curiously dark and unhealthy looking olive of the octaroon, old, young, and middling; but all the first and last are female. Quite conclusively and completely now I see why I cannot ride inside—at least, not in these clothes. The man himself counts for less. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet"; but a man varies according to the garments he wears. Thinking of this world-wide fact, the hollowness of its convention, etc., I return to the front of the

diligence, meet the "jen'l'man" (a biggish, easy-faced, rather round, four-stripe man of the R.E.'s), and find that he, although rather suspicious in a way, and a little grudgingly—it seems to me—doesn't mind my having a seat at his side. His objection, I surmise, is all because of the heat. He has looked forward to an uncrowded journey that would be airy in spite of the sun. I try to oil the wheels of the matter by a light reminder that small men don't fill much space, then climb to my perch amongst the parcels yet above them withal, and away we go.

Half-an-hour later I have found that my fellow-traveller is quite a pleasant, communicable man of more than average intelligence and information. In his speech there is something that is reminiscent of my early years. I therefore suggest that he may know such-and-such a town. He does, and other towns in the district, which I know also. Thus we find a closer link between us, and he tells me he has been here since before the war began, and is going to Hamilton to buy Christmas presents for his family and on behalf of some friends.

Amongst other things that I learn: The species of trees that we pass; the existence of some fine stalactite caves up a side-road which he points

out; the fact that there is neither a railway nor any motor traffic on the island; that an American traction company came here some years ago and ran motor char-a-bancs from St. George's to Hamilton, etc., but the people would not patronise them and they "faded away"; that the inhabitants generally are taking the war with a cheerful seriousness, doing all they can for one Fund or another, and believing that the Allies cannot fail to beat the enemy; that they formerly depended considerably on the annual, great influx of well-to-do Americans, who came here for the winter. He took me to be one of them, because I carry my watch "in a trousers-pocket, as so many of them do." I am not flattered, and ask if I speak like one. He smiles disarmingly and says: "No. That was what puzzled me." He goes on to say that the absence of these tourists since the war began and the war itself has sent up the general cost of living about ten to fifteen per cent.—yet why this should be heaven alone can tell; seeing that, although there is less money in circulation, there is far less demand for the necessities of life such as should be satisfactory here and easily produced. For here, so it appears almost, a man may scratch the surface of the red earth, put in his seed, go to sleep, wake up and

eat the fruits of his labour; if it has not already awakened him by dropping ripe on to his head.

In addition, my companion informs me that at least three-fourths of the population are coloured, or "tainted," which is all the same, for "a touch of black blood always forces the owner to keep with his 'colour'; and if a white workman marries colour it's all the same—he must go with her side. But white working-men are very scarce here. The whites are the business people, or retired, or officials; although some of the blacks do keep petty little shops in their own districts, and make what's quite a bit of money to them. They also do most of the carting, boating, and transport generally."

He tells me that "Mrs. Hodgson Burnett lives at that house up there"; that such real farming as there is on the island is done on the side opposite to where we are travelling; that "in the spring of the year this road is a blaze of glory with these juniper trees in bloom"; that bananas are not grown freely here and scarcely pay, because the trees will not attain any proper height and load, and it is found better to let each one bear once, then cut it down and grow another (This, I surmise, is a result of the shallowness of the soil on its coral formation); and that the dead-looking

Gulf Stream weed, which I see being carted away from the whitish bays, has been raked ashore some time ago and is now being taken to the land for manure, according to custom.

By the time we arrive in Hamilton my kindly-disposed informant has told me a number of other things; but I don't think they matter, not just here, at any-rate. At his request I now tell him what sort of shops I want, and straight-away he goes with me from place to place, till I've made my purchases, personal and commissioned.

In the course of this I have learnt that all things are priced in shillings and dollars, except two or three shops where the American coin is alone stated on the cards. Of course, this is an outcome of those American tourists' invasion, and I don't like it; as a Britisher I distinctly dislike it. It hurts my British pride and independence, and I feel like giving a public lecture to the shopkeepers of Hamilton on the subject of traders' sycophancy. But are they British? I don't know, for I have heard more American than English here so far.

Now I remember my glasses, the mainspring of the journey, which I should have recollected at first and have taken at once to be mended, whilst I did my shopping and had lunch. My

friend directs me to the best place for this purpose, tells me there is a decent restaurant opposite, and says he must be off to meet some friends. I like his company, try to persuade him to have an early lunch with me, fail, and we part, to my regret.

However, I make for the shop he has mentioned, go in, ask the attendant if he can have my glasses mended within an hour, and tell him what the break is and how important. With a nasal intonation he says "Yes," and asks to see them. I haul out the case that I snatched from my bag in a hurry this morning, open it, and see that I have brought a pair of "London fogs," in a case similar to the one in which my bi-phocals are now reposing aboard the *Tramp*! It is not a matter to dwell on. All the strong words and self-abasements that I could utter won't improve it. So, with a word of apology and explanation to the shopman (I have no compunction in letting him see what a fool I am.), I go out and cross the street to the restaurant.

CHAPTER VII

On the road again—A disappointment—A side-track to beauty—An abomination—Peeping into fairy-land—Tom Moore, a pleasing failure and a reverie—Anxious waiting—Out of place—A ship-chandler's ways of thinking—Charmingly entertained—A comparison—Old Maids' Alley by moonlight—A lovely morning—More anxious waiting—An unwelcome "welcome."

AFTER an hour in that cool, shaded, palm-decorated room I make a more extended tour of the place, buy myself a lemon-tree stick and a couple of small water-colours as souvenirs. By this time further information and scrutiny have led me to the conclusion, patent enough to any observant enquirer, that Hamilton is a busy, little, go-a-head port on its front; but, like so many other sub-tropical places, sleepy in its middle and back and not without pretensions.

At two o'clock I am on the box-seat again, with still much to do in the few hours between sunset and me. My charioteer is not the same, yet "ob de same Comp'ny." He, too, is a young mulatto, talkative and pleasant. He manages his team well, and gives me interesting particulars of labour conditions, cost of living to working-

men, rents, rates, taxes, etc. There is no water on the island, only what is caught when rain falls. Having a good horse is a sign of prosperity. (His two are very passable, as were his partner's this morning.) They are mostly imported from "de States." He points to his near-side animal, says it is worth £40 in Bermuda (it might fetch £20 in England); then gives a cut to the off-sider (put there because of its lesser worth), and adds that he intends to visit England when the war is over, "if business keep up."

By a wood he pulls up, disappears, and returns with a great bunch of small, green branches with tiny red berries alternately up the stems and with little, oval leaves. I ask him the purpose of it. "Holly!" says he. "Dat's holly for Ch'istmas!" I point out to him the difference between this and real holly. He listens, understands, laughs, and exclaims, "All same, dis holly to us!" Holly at Christmas—and a thousand to one none of his forebears were ever on the eastern side of the Atlantic. How customs spread!

Opposite Mrs. Hodgson Burnett's place I alight, entrusting my parcels with the driver, to be left by him at a certain store in St. George's Market Square, he telling me at what time "de nex' 'bus" will come along.

Disappointment! I find that Mrs. Burnett is in England, doing war-work. Down from the house I come, and trudge away south, crossing the road every time I can gain shade by doing so. This is a sparsely populated part of the route; hence I reach the way to the stalactite caves without the chance of a "lift."

Here, after a rest and some cooling fruit bought at a way-side shop near by, I decide to miss the next "'bus," go to the caves, and return to St. George's by what I am told will be the last "'bus" to-day; it will be in time for me to go aboard before darkness sets in. So I start. Within ten minutes' time I strike a part of the island that has a different appearance from what lies behind me. It is richer yet cooler to look at, quieter, has truly an atmosphere of secluedness. A small house occurs at an odd interval, bowered-in with foliage—yes, they seem rather to *occur* than to have been built; and the road appears to say that it knows a vehicle about once a week.

Now I come on a scene of rare loveliness—a real blue-water, large, sun-lit lagoon, whose waters lap the roots of trees on every side, and out of which I can see fish springing; whilst dullish-red and bright-blue long-winged birds (of which I saw jewellers' facsimiles in Hamilton)

go from shore to shore, flashing notes of colour in the hot sunlight. Another rest; meanwhile I take a fill of the beauty.

Tom Paine said: "One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime."

I leave this scene full of joy, scribbling as I go—full of thoughts that do me good, and pleased with the knowledge that come winter and come spring it is always summer around that lovely lagoon. "Change and decay" may come elsewhere; here the leaves fall only when pushed off by new ones, and the birds sing and nest and bear their young without apparent break. The hard barrenness of frost and the gauntness of death may show their grim faces in other scenes; here they are unknown; here senility goes green to the great change, and the crowd of everlasting greenness around hides what decay there is. There may be monotony in this—there is nothing without flaw in the world—but the knowledge of that eternal beauty is worth coming to Bermuda to gain.

Five minutes later, at a curve in the road, I am confronted by a large, weather-marked notice-board, on two extra long legs, and containing this, in big, blatant letters:

“ VISIT

TOM MOORE’S HOUSE—

DELUSION SHORE AND CHICKEN DINNER

BUFFET CON

YE OLDE TOM MOORE HOUSE, ERECTED 1670
OCCUPIED BY THE FAMOUS POET, 1803 ”

I gaze in horror, stupefied impotence and anger; then go my way, thinking (with hope and desire for parents of the thought, of course) that the thing is some tasteless joke. I am determined not to believe in its reality for the present.

I arrive at the caves, and send out a shrill, echoing blast with my fingers. (“Blow the whistle,” says a card in the open window of the pay-box; but I don’t know in whose mouth the whistle was last.) Inside I forget instantly that soul-destroying thing at the bend in the road. As such things go the world around, these caves are small, almost tiny; but a description of their delicate, pinky loveliness lies as far beyond me, as Heaven is beyond the tradesman when he is selling what he, and not the buyer, knows to be an adulterated commodity. So I leave these bits of electric-lighted fairy-land, with their miniature

lakes of salt water reflecting, mirror-like (they are so wondrously clear and still, and rise and fall with the tide of the Atlantic), the arched beauty above and the small resemblances of castle, church and chateau at their sides.

By the disgusting notice-board I turn aside, resolved to get at the truth of the thing, and now equally convinced that some American boarding-house-keeper has been at his fell work; also praying to Providence that, as the sign seems to indicate, he has failed and had to go his dollar-seeking way elsewhere. A longish, unfenced, weed-grown and generally neglected drive through a wood brings me to the house,¹ which makes me nearly dance with delight to find it empty. It is a substantial enough house, colonially of some pretensions, with the bight of one lagoon at its

¹ It was after the appearance of his *Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Little* that Lord Moira gave Moore the collectorship of Bermuda in 1803; but he did not go there till the following January, so the would-be exploiter of poetical associations was wrong. Nor did Moore remain there long. The seclusion of the house and the quietude and shortage of colonial company did not suit his love of sociability. He soon appointed a deputy, made a tour through the United States and Canada, and was back in England by the following November. Fifteen years later it was found that his deputy had a deficiency of £6000, which Moore was called on to pay, and in which his friends offered to help him. But the authorities reduced the sum to £1000, which Moore paid from what he earned with his pen.

front door and the nose of another at its back. What an ideal place for a Creole romance of passion and pathos!

I sit down on a moss-covered, cedar log, as a blue-bird flashes between me and the rather dilapidated house and is lost in the deep shade around the rear lagoon. And here I reflect, happily, that this would never suit that part of the Quickrich tribe at whom the wording of yonder notice-board must have been aimed. They would want some "movies" quite close, with a change of films at every show, electric launches on the lagoons, sand-beaches by the house—so that they could lie half in the still, blue-looking water and chew gum all day—and probably some hooting "switchbacks" and the like in the woods, if only to keep them sure that they had not gone to another world. The exploiter appears to have been unable to give them such, so they did not come in sufficient numbers for his purpose. And as he, I guess (which was English before America knew the phrase), didn't appeal to the better class of his fellow-countrymen, they didn't come. (Oh! yes, there are many thousands of gentlemen in the United States. I mean men of good manners, education, unobtrusive ways, and reverence for things that money cannot buy;

and some of them are even publishers. I write this because I find that so very many of my untravelled countrymen are given to judging Americans generally by certain classes of tourists whom we used to see in England before the war, and by stage varieties whom they have seen.) And is there no pound-seeking Englishman who, did opportunity offer, would do the same outrage to American poetical associations? Yes, thousands of them.

I am aroused by a thought of missing the " 'bus," take a last look around and hasten away. But the pace has to be slackened soon. In that reverie I had forgotten that I may not hurry, especially in such heat as this. Yielding weakly to a sudden onslaught of the memento-hunter's spirit, I, thinking of jovial-hearted Moore, tear up a small cactus from the side of the drive, tie a spare handkerchief around its roots and some soil, with the intention of having it potted in St. George's. By the end of the drive I pause a few minutes to throw stones at the offending words on the board, in hope of thus obliterating some of the letters.

Without my meeting a soul on the way, coming or going, I arrive again at the road-junction, where the " 'bus " should pick me up, and learn

that it hasn't come along. So I get more fruit, sit down under a banana-tree and scribble a notebook letter to a friend. If I stood up, my head would be amongst the foliage.

Time goes by. My letter is finished and more observations are jotted down. Generally prepared for what is pretty certain to happen, I pull out a little pocket-edition of *Eothen* and proceed to make Kinglake's acquaintance. Still the afternoon wanes. The " 'bus " is three-quarters of an hour late, and I begin to be anxious about arriving at St. George's in time to go off to the *Tramp* before dark. When the thing comes crunching along in its easy way, I know that it is touch-and-go for me; but I don't care much, as I think that the vessel cannot sail till to-morrow evening. (This morning the boatman told me that she would not get coal to-day.) Some accident has caused the " 'bus " to be late.

Worse still, so far as concerns me, the box-seat is filled by two pieces of femininity—an elderly, squat, stolid, coal-black one and a young, sickly-hued mulatto, whose big eyes show an unconscionable amount of white. The latter stares at me with the innocence of the young and the interest of a youthful yokel in a busy town that is new to him. Her companion looks dead ahead.

Again how I wish for a camera, then wonder if an offer to pay their fares will induce them—or the elder, at least—to go inside. The immobility of her ebony-like face (it might have been carved from that wood and polished) disconcerts me. Cowardly I turn, go aft, and climb into the close, niggery atmosphere just as the vehicle starts, after depositing four or five passengers and a number of parcels. Every face inside is more or less black; two are male, one in khaki and one in civilian clothes. All their voices hush at my blameless appearance, and every one looks at me in the way that asks plainly yet not offensively: “What are you intruding here for?” I have never before been made to feel so completely, wordlessly and plaintively that I am out of my proper locale—or rather my clothes, etc., are out of theirs. Guiltily and penitently I sit and look over the heads of two children opposite, vowing that in any future circumstances of this sort I will have a “carriadge,” if it costs me all the money I have. Item: Nearly every one of my fellow-passengers has a bunch of the so-called “holly.”

The short evening is closing in, as we arrive in St. George's. After hastily securing my parcels, I go to the ship-chandler's, close by. He, “'bus-”

man Number Two had told me, owns the boat. Yes; and he is away, taking the captain on board. Oh! and again I try to hurry. On reaching the tiny, weed-choked bay I find the ship-chandler's men mooring the boat. He stands by. At my query as to being put on board, he answers: "Yes, for a pound." I gaze at his set, keen, clean-shaven face, think of his slight nasal twang, and wonder if he is "playing the game." Seeing my astonishment he adds: "These men get a pound every time they go off—five shillings each." Then follows this colloquy.

"You employ them, I believe.—Don't you?"

"Yes."

"When they came off twice yesterday did they get ten shillings each?"

I had learnt from the R.E. non-com. that top-price for coloured labour is five shillings a day. The ship-chandler makes no reply. I put the question to his chief-boatman, who stares from me to his employer, then at him again, laughs and walks away. My man of cabin and working stores rather blushes. Oh, these traders! They would ruin Heaven, if they were there. Knowing that the price of the ship's stores pays for the use of the boat, I tell him I am a member of the crew—the Purser (who has no purse except his own, and

very little in it), and ask if he thinks it fair to charge me a pound to go aboard. He replies that he has done with the ship, and the bills are paid. I ask about the coals. He answers that they have been shipped to-day, and that the *Tramp* sails at six o'clock in the morning. I nearly collapse. But the chief-boatman saves me by saying that there is a load of stores to go off at five o'clock. I won his admiration by my handling of his craft, and now I give him a look of gratitude, remarking that I will go aboard with him, when he goes. He replies that he will take care of my parcels, if I like. I do like, hand them and the cactus to him, tell him I will give him a shilling and the cost of materials for potting the latter; then I turn to retrace my steps to St. George's.

The ship-chandler overtakes me immediately, excusing his conduct on the score that he has to make all he can in these hard times, with few vessels coming to the place. He owns a large, busy, general grocer and tobacconist's shop. I give his good-looking, alert face and well-set-up figure another scrutiny, reflect that from his appearance I should have thought better of him, ignore his remark, and begin to ask questions about the effect of the war on Bermudians. By the time we arrive in the Market Square we are talking

amicably, and he tells me of "a good, private house where captains stay." It is close by, and I go there.

Having supped frugally yet satisfactorily at a neatly-appointed table, I go to the drawing-room. There are no captains here at present; but the daughter of the house comes in, and I very soon forget that I want to do more shopping, especially to buy a picture of the house between the lagoons. Again I hear—this time charmingly, in spite of certain Americanisms and a slight, a very slight, flavour of that country's speech—of the war-work of the island, how men have gone, and all are still cheerful; of preparations for Christmas festivities—how inappropriate it sounds in this heat; of the American tourists who used to come, and what their two years and a half of absence has meant to the island, especially to the Hamilton district, where most of them stayed.

During a lull in our conversation, caused by my *vis-a-vis's* brother coming in about something, my thoughts run on the apparent differences between Hamilton and St. George's—up there style, show and exclusiveness banked up behind trade; down here homeliness everywhere and all that the word carries. There may be more money

in the former town; I don't know, and the matter is mentioned merely because of the multitude's measurement of things. Though why on earth any reasoning creature should appraise anything by money, except a commodity, I never did understand. Heaven knows, to its sorrow, I have no doubt, that but little brains are required to get money by trade and the manufacturing of things for daily use. It needs only a lack of fine feeling, an elastic conscience, and the astuteness to extract three from two, and more where possible. Why, if half the talent (using the word in its old sense) that is given to the professions were to be turned to the making of money by trade, in any of its chop and barter forms, the average man of its many ways would have to take to manual labour to make a living. But I was thinking of this Port of St. George's *versus* the Port of Hamilton: Here there is the old colonial life that warms your heart; up yonder there is too much of the other tribe of the Quick-rich's, with its up-to-date evils of "swank" and imitated exclusiveness.

In the course of further talk I learn that my surmise—springing out of the wording on the notice-board—was correct concerning the would-be exploiter of Moore's temporary residence.

She says that the people hereabout were glad generally that he did not succeed in his—a pause, and I add, “Nefarious designs.” She laughs light-heartedly, demurs at my adjective, and uses another Americanism; whereat I ask how it is that one hears so much of the United States twang on the island, and these remarks ensue:

“Oh! do you? Shuare? I didn’t know it!” in arch surprise and that regular, soft, nasal touch of hers now faintly increased, either out of surprise or purposely.

“Yes. I suppose the islanders generally look on themselves as a sort of British?”

“Of British *stock*—yes, I guess we are, we white folk; but all-in-all we’re Bermudians, you know.”

“But what with the twang, and the dollar-prices in the shop-windows, the people generally seem to be unduly Americanised.”

“Oh! do we?” more archness. Another pause, then, “Now tell me just, right away, am *I* Americanised? Because *I* don’t see it.”

I am dumb, unable to rise to the occasion. I see two bright eyes yonder, watching me mischievously, whilst her quick fingers work on a piece of fabric; and I wonder how it is that a woman *will* take unto herself any criticism that

is meant to be applied generally, and why she persists in rushing in personally where a man hardly ever thinks of putting his foot, figuratively. For the fourth time this evening I say I must go out and buy a few things. She tells me it is too late, all the shops are closed. I inform her that it is her fault for keeping me in by the practice of her charms. She interrupts with the laughing announcement that she will get whatever I want and send it after the ship.

- Being aware that she has already done larger kindnesses for other strangers, I accept at once; to be told the next moment, with proper enthusiasm, that she has "a great stunt on"—*i.e.* to win a prize for originality at the St. George's fancy-dress ball on New Year's Eve, the proceeds to be given to the Red Cross. The costume is described in detail, and I am asked if I can improve on it. Here I fail completely, to my annoyance—because the costume is even now on its way, and I cannot suggest any improvement that will not alter it too much. Suddenly I perceive or think I do, that it is not so much an inventive faculty that's wanted, as approbation for the idea and its details. Oh, human nature, especially feminine! I ejaculate to myself, then give ungrudgingly all the praise that is expected.

In the midst of this in comes a Norwegian captain, whose talk soon shows me that I must remain silent, or he and I will be quickly at logger-heads on war-subjects. The lady of the house and her son enter. The Norseman returns to the tenor of his ideas. So I ask to be excused, put on my hat, take a cool stroll through Old Maids' Alley by moonlight (with appropriate thoughts by the way, of course), and so on to higher ground and to all the near and distant, half-shrouded and scarcely perceptible beauty that is to be seen.

* * * * * * *

Four-thirty a.m.: I am sitting on an unserviceable old hawser, close to the quay on the harbour side of the square, making notes by the glare of a big, electric light on a great, bare pole near by, and waiting for our load of stores to go over the hill to the boat. Beyond the harbour and away to sea the opalescent dawn is spreading its tender beauties lavishly to right, left and above; whilst underneath the growing light, on a craft at anchor by the end of Ordnance Island (a constructed wharf with warehouses on it, a cable's length or so from where I sit), men come and go a little vaguely, two or three of them in long stocking-caps, which I make out to be red. And

I think of how many an old-time romance of blood, buccaneers and the sea has sprung from a scene far less suggestive than this.

The morning air is "fresh"—a little "nippy" and invigorating. I shiver slightly, take a few turns up and down the quay, ever with an eye on the shop yonder, out of which are to come our stores, and through whose open doors I can hear the curious, thin, quacking tones of coloured men and the harder, coarser ones of whites, for other ships' goods are already being sent out. Except for these, and an occasional clang or clatter on a vessel's deck out in the harbour, the morning would be as silent as it is beautiful, now that the soft, bluey-greys are becoming pinky; and the town here and its fortified, sheltering hills, immediately behind it, lie wrapped in the clear, penetrating light and the hush of sunrise.

What a ghastly-looking anachronism this electric light is, on its ugly pole, in the warm flush of the morning! Why doesn't some one put it out? I would push it over, if I could, or smash the bulb—it is such a blatant piece of weak ugliness, struggling uselessly to keep itself in the scene.

Five o'clock. The sun is at his regular morning business of giving all things some degree of

beauty, and still I wait and wander about, go to the shop, ask questions, find myself hungry, buy a big sandwich and some fruit, then come back to the old hawser here, eat, watch the shop and make more notes.

It is after six o'clock when we arrive at the boat. I have gone through an hour of keen anxiety, lest Captain Dash should become angry at the delay, and put to sea without this last load; but yonder she is still, happily for me. The boat is loaded within a plank of her gunnel—about a ton of stores—and out we go, me at the yoke-lines again, my parcels by me, also the cactus, unpotted. The boatman's excuse is that when he went out yester-evening to get a pot Sam Brownleg told him of a job in the harbour, and when he returned all the shops were closed. Here I see two of his men exchanging tell-tale looks and smiles. I follow them up, amusedly, and find that his and Sam's job was a big effort to reduce the liquid of The Ship, for which reason he is heavy-headed and slow of eye this morning.

When we come alongside I climb the ladder to the harbour-deck, see Captain Dash, in his pyjamas, at the nearest corner of our islet above, make a mock salute, and hail him jocularly with the time-honoured: "Have come aboard,

sir." In reply I get a gruff, nasty toned: " Yes, I see you have; and dam'-near lost your passage." Now I look up sharply, see an unpleasant expression on his face, and ask myself whether this is some of his fairly frequent morning ill-humour, or if he is annoyed at my return in time to continue the voyage. Already he has given me certain definite reasons to know that he hates having to carry an " owner's passenger." Then I recollect that I am an interloper who has received many instances of Christian kindness; and, true to my determination that no one's vagaries shall drive me out of the vessel till I am ready to go, I take my parcels, etc., go up the ladder, and am gratified to find that those who commissioned me to buy presents for them are delighted with what I have brought.

CHAPTER VIII

A pitiful case—"Features"—The Delaware—Some Philadelphian points—And the women: some of them—No international politics—War-time conditions—An invitation—The "Mummers' Parade"—I retire—Joked or not joked—A good Samaritan—A search and a "find"—Jolly company—An awkward meeting—Crew items—Another invitation—Loaded.

BEFORE day-break this morning (December 27, and bitterly cold) we made the Delaware and took our pilot aboard. I hear that he had to be hauled up the ladder with a line around his waist. Poor old man! To think that one of his years and condition should be at such an occupation in these latitudes! Bent almost to the shape of two sides of a square, he came into the cabin here to prepare for the upper bridge. If he were upright he would be a broadish man of five feet ten or eleven inches. As it is, he has the appearance of being a small man. He put a hand on the table, and I started. It was hard to believe that the thing had not come direct from one of those old-time, exaggerated and mostly grotesque wood-engravings of giants, gnomes and hobgoblins. In an instant I knew his trouble—rheumatism; the

scourge that made me three times a cripple and left me likely to be one for life. But it was not of this poor sufferer's disfiguring sort. He immediately changed his boots for large, rubber things thickly lined with felt, put on coats, etc., of equal warmth, accepted the captain's offer of a peg of whisky, and went to his cold post. In thinking of his infirmities I forgot to satisfy at once my eagerness for war-news in the papers he had brought us, according to universal custom.

I am not menial-minded, far from it. I have never yet seen the "dignity of labour" when done for another at either low or high pay, unless it were some creative or constructive work in which the worker had a proper feeling of pride. I never could play second-fiddle successfully, that is, with due humbleness; but I will be hanged to the yardarm if I wouldn't clean boots, rather than come to sea, and in a North Atlantic winter especially, as yonder pilot does. Even Captain Dash has never before seen anything like it.

* * * * *

Evening: We are anchored at the quarantine station, in an intermittent fog, with ice going down on the tide, and the *Tramp* being fumigated.

From England, land of baths, soap and cleanliness, thirty-odd days of wintry weather, and must be fumigated! A paltry, bare-faced dodge to make fees for the up-keep of a quarantine station without cost to its owners. I have heard much of this being done in United States ports. It is one of the perennial causes of complaint amongst British ship-masters and owners and has been so these thirty years or more. Whilst it is going on the tea-bell rings. Our master and pilot have theirs in the cabin above. I join the officers in the saloon; and presently, uninvited, in steps a young workman—chief of the half-dozen fumigators. With becoming socialism he seats himself on a chair that has been unscrewed and placed some three feet from the table. He is dirty and smells (I am told) of his occupation; and if his stream of interfering, rather affected than nasal, and half-informed talk could stink it would be of general arrogance. . . . (Spots are appropriate here.)

To-night we have the gramophone again, after which the pilot tells Captain Dash and me that the reason of his still following his occupation is to set up in business a son who has already failed in two or three ventures. I pass over my opinion of such a son, and also leave unwritten what I

think of affection of so sacrificial a nature; it is too great to write about.

* * * * *

Three days have gone by, during which I have been ashore, had my glasses mended, and gone here and there to find things out. Our master has insisted that I ought to let the newspapermen come and interview me, and held forth on their little-known love of "copy," how they would hurry humbly to talk with an English writer in these times, how they would quote him correctly, etc. But I say no. I am here seeking health, not advertisement. Besides, who am I that I should fill their valuable space with my opinions on, probably enough, things I have not studied?—anything they care to ask. What have I to say that others could not say in a better way? I am neither a civilian war-expert, a politician nor a peace-crank. Therefore I say no, and keep to the quietude I love.

It is Sunday. We are at anchor between Philadelphia and this prosperous-looking town—"city" I should say—on the New Jersey side here, where nearly a dozen vessels, mostly of ocean-going type, are being built. I gaze around me, and what do I see? A grand, sweeping river, flanked for miles with hives of industries, and

bearing on its muddy waters a fair amount of shipping for these times; also, just now, masses of ice from one to six inches thick. Seen as it is to-day, under bright sunshine, with thin mists—a sort of Turneresque haze—partially hiding the ugly, money-making concerns on its flat banks and the far-reaching city, it is a sight in which there is some grandeur, a little beauty, and a plenitude of suggestion.

Evening is approaching, and either for that reason or because the day is Sunday, there is not so much of industry's black smoke and blatant noise to foul the scene, offend the eye and stun the ear. All the same, puffing, hooting, rampant, small tugboats, high-built in their superstructure, and ferry boats—diminutive copies of the great, Mississippi "all-above-water" craft—come and go pretty frequently. Prosperity is seen everywhere; and "hustle" has its nerve-straining mark on most things.

I am now dealing with a statistical town, and must, I suppose, "play the game." There is no poetry here, except the crude rhythm of blatant industry. Philadelphia, the "Quaker City" founded by our William Penn—as you learn here and there in the main parts of the place—is a town of a million and a half population, a very

large trade and many really fine buildings; the best of the last, from an artistic point of view, being, by far, the old Hall of Independence—at least, to my mind, it ranks the first in the town, the greater, more imposing City Hall notwithstanding; and even that is dwarfed and crowded in by comparatively ugly sky-scrapers of fifteen to twenty-two stories, just as our St. Paul's Cathedral is crowded by smaller, ugly places of commerce.

Reading and hearsay had led me to expect a truly fine town—a town of which, from suburbs to centre, its citizens could honestly be proud on all counts. Alas, what a disillusionment to a travelled Britisher! The parks are fine; they are spacious and well laid-out, and the theatres are excellent; but the music-hall entertainments are of a low average and some of their “turns” are of a sort that is not now tolerated at home. With the centre of the town—around the City Hall, that is, where the streets are paved with wood and asphalt, where the shops are large and well-appointed, and art is seen at once in the general architecture—there is no fault to find. But elsewhere—what a difference! Not in the slums, either; for of slums, such as we know them in our towns, there appear to be few. But the

working-class districts—what miles and miles of streets and houses, bald, squalid, and ugly!—depressing to the last degree. They would make one shiver on a hot summer's day. The picturesqueness of our slums is a national asset against the dreariness of theirs.

Large portions of main streets are ill-paved with granite blocks, in thousands of places so worn as to be like the cobbles of old times. There are many miles of these stone-paved streets, and over them run hundreds of mean-looking horses, with light waggons clattering at their heels. I have not seen fifty good horses in Philadelphia; and almost the only unsought reference to the war that I have heard was from a resident who, in reply to a remark of mine on the horses, said smilingly, "I guess it's just your war—taken all our good horses away, friend."

The tram-cars are ugly "single-deckers," run on the over-head system; and the standards that carry their electric wires are uglier still—short and seem to have had their tops cut off. The cars themselves remind me strongly of those in which I had my hat shaken off repeatedly in Chippitooli Street, New Orleans, some eight and twenty years ago. But the system of conveyance is nigh perfect; where the cars, over-head and

underground railways don't go, there is little need to travel.

A word about the women, to whom I must excuse myself in the words of Iago: "I am nothing if not critical." See them where you will, indoors or out, where fashion foregathers or the workers live, they are, on the whole, finely built and "well-covered." They carry themselves perhaps a trifle too stiffly, and have about them the famed American woman's spirit of independence; but they have no colour, for which I suppose over-heated rooms are to blame. Feminism in its most attractive form seems to be a missing quantity. As for the tastes of so many of the elder women, not of the "down-town" sort either, but of the private motor-car class—see their short skirts, coloured silk stockings and bare chests, then go your way and say nothing, think though you must.

Of politics one hears little, indeed, that is not strictly local, and nothing whatever that is international. The war, and everything that concerns it, is a tabooed subject. On the streets and markets, in restaurants, bars, offices, and public conveyances the world's greatest crisis seems never to be mentioned—at least, if it is talked of, all comment is silenced on the appearance of a

Britisher; although, with the exception of his speech and his lack of gush and a flat-topped felt hat, I fail to understand how they can tell him at sight. Almost everywhere that I have spoken of the war—and this has been pretty often, after the discovery that nothing was being said about it—my remarks were either answered shortly and with an evident desire to say nothing, or they were allowed to go by without answer. Of course, it is impossible to say exactly what is the reason of this; but I have gathered generally that there is abroad a sort of shame in the matter, and I find this to be the opinion of other Britishers. Personally I should say that we have the full sympathy of pretty nearly all men who are the descendants of British blood, and the same may be said, I am told, of the majority of those who have the blood of our Allies in their veins.

The real cost of living, mainly in food and clothing, has gone up about 25 per cent., to which the producers and middlemen have added another 10 per cent. for extra profit; but trade and work have more than counterbalanced this. One employer and man of affairs said to me, in reply to a question as to the cause of this: "Indirectly it is the war. For instance, I have to pay higher prices for indifferent labour than I

had to pay for efficient, simply because the efficient has gone to making munitions at much higher wages than he can get elsewhere. And I and others have to put up with indifferent workmen at good men's price, because they know we can't get better. The long and short of it to employers is that ten hours' work now doesn't produce more than seven hours did before the war."

Another man, the owner of a little fleet of tug-boats and similar craft, told me that his engineers now get eighty-five to a hundred and ten dollars a month against seventy-five to ninety-five formerly, and stokers forty-five in place of their previous forty. In addition to this they are provided with food and bedding; so that clothing is all they have to buy, and the single men mostly live aboard. The same man assured me that these men's food now costs eighteen dollars a month per head against the fourteen dollars of a year ago. But humour breaks into all things. Two stokers, on behalf of themselves and fellows generally, approached my informant for an increase in wages. In answer to his question as to their ground for this, the spokesman said: "Cost o' livin'!" He replied: "But your food is found you." Silence. "And you sleep aboard,

in beds and bedding that I pay for. Where does the increased cost of living come in?" They turned about and went to their work again. "Yes," said he to me, "we've got the worst labour conditions I've ever known, and I've been forty years at it. No—the man that has to employ labour here now from day to day can't honestly go to church."

To return to things municipal, there is not a public lavatory in the whole of this great city. The only places that approximate to our underground conveniences are in bars—*i.e.* public houses. I am informed that every bar is compelled to have such a place. But whether this is custom or actual law, what a premium it puts on temperance! For what man—a Britisher, anyhow—would have the aplomb to go through a man's bar without paying his respects to it? Yet this same municipality has posted up notices "that every person seen to expectorate in a public place will be fined one dollar for every offence"—and in America, too!—this country of much sentiment, liberty, expectoration, many dollars, and almost super-human energy both physically and in ideas.

The master interrupts me with a genial invitation to go ashore with him to-morrow and see the

carnival. I am to be his guest till we return. Being naturally and properly impressed by this kindness I thank him suitably, and he asks what I have been writing during the past two hours. I tell him. He knows some of my prejudices, laughs and remarks: "You know most of the world must shout or bust when it gets on, and it's better to shout than break up." He laughs again and warns me that if I "stick to the truth" I shall "have America down on" me. I say I will risk that, and we fall to a discussion on the merits of making enemies by telling the truth *versus* gaining friends by the art of hiding it in circumlocution. It becomes a drawn game, and we turn-in.

Morning: The tug-boat is here betimes, and we go ashore, me with only a couple of dollars in my pocket, because of being a guest. The third officer (our master's son) is with us, and the company is made a quartette by picking up another captain as we go. All haste is made to a point of vantage near the City Hall, opposite the judges' stand (as Captain Dash will have it so), and here we post ourselves to watch the "Mummers' Parade," an annual and the only thing of its sort in the United States. It proves to be a gorgeous show, humorous and satirical

in places and particularly gorgeous in individual cases—silk, satin, velvet, cloth of gold, spangles, flowers, tights (a bitter north-west wind blowing, and fine snow falling on it all!) and everything that can make a carnival gay, except sunshine—a procession of gaudy colours and merriment that has already taken an hour and a half to pass the judges, *i.e.* the mayor and councilmen, for prizes amounting to \$6485 and a first prize of \$650—and not a woman in it all! From what I hear women never take part in the affair, hence the female characters are impersonated.

This year's procession is the longest and most expensive ever known. It seems to be nearly as old as Philadelphia. Local and American politics appear here and there; but international affairs have no part, with the exception of two humorous caricatures named "An English Caterpillar" (tank) and "The Submarine Deutschland," both of which are the work of one club—to show that there is no bias. Special trains have been run from New York, Baltimore, and elsewhere.

Finding the crowd too thick and suffocating for my good, I tell Captain Dash and his son that I am going out of it—if possible—indicate where they will find me (should they break away before the procession finishes), and out of the racket and

crush I begin to edge. It is a slow and trying process. However, at length I reach the indicated spot of comparative quietude and a good view, where I wanted us to stay originally, but our master would be in the thick of things. Here, on the steps of some offices, I recover much lost breath, haul out my book and begin to make notes, until neighbouring spectators apparently think me an American reporter, whereon the book disappears, with an important note half-made.

Nearly an hour has gone by, yet the tail-end of the procession has not. Neither have my companions come for me. Shivering with cold, I slip away to an adjacent bar, get a warming drink, and return and wait till the "Parade" is finished. I keep my elevated position, whilst the crowd thins, watching the corner yonder, where I suppose the trio still to be. Now, when I cannot miss them amongst this moving remainder of the multitude, I go to look for them.

Gaze and hunt where I will I cannot find them. I wait and search until there are only strayed revellers about. Where on earth can they have gone? I stand, wondering what to do. At the end of another half-hour there is but the one conclusion: I have lost them—or *have they lost*

me?—in a city of a million and a half people, the most of whom are supposed to be out-of-doors to-day, holiday-making in the streets, bars, theatres, “movies,” etc. To find them now would be phenomenal, equal to finding a needle in a haystack. I have two dollars in my pocket; the *Tramp* is ten dollars’ distance away, and in this city (where ninety-five cents are charged for the ordinary cleaning and pressing of a pair of trousers) I know that my two will not do more than get me food for the day—not in decent quarters, at any-rate. How, then, am I to sleep, eat in the morning and go aboard?

I begin to wonder if Captain Dash has played one of his unconsidered jokes on me. Such a thing would be thought fine fun one with another aboard-ship. Where feeding and feeling are always robust and sometimes riotous there is not much delicacy of treatment. But surely, I reflect, he would not so far forget his duty as a host on a day like this and in such a scene! No—impossible. They must have broken away and looked for me during the few minutes I was getting that warm drink. But why didn’t they wait a little? I have waited an hour and a half for them. Why did they hurry off so soon?

Now I remember that our master is on occasions

a curious fellow of half-secrets. Had he some reason to go to the ship's agent by a given hour, and said nothing about it? I have been there several times, hence right away, and without any further guessing, I board a car. (These Americanisms are finding *some* lodgement in my mind.)

The agent is in, the only one on the premises—a companionable man, whom I have not met till now, and who is holding the fort, so that the whole of his staff can see the “Parade.” I ask about Captain Dash, and am told that he has not been here, is not expected, and that no tug-boat is going to the ship to-day—all work being at a standstill until to-morrow. Blankly I explain my position. He smiles kindly, offers to lend me money. I express my appreciation of his Samaritanism and offer him a receipt. He, with no further knowledge of me than that I know who Captain Dash is, smiles again, replies: “I’ll take a chance on your face,” and we begin to discuss the war and its effects on the eastern States.

By-and-bye he tells me that I shall probably find Captain Dash at Green’s, a hostelry, where ship-masters often put up. Thus I go my way, with due and permanent thought of the man

who, in addition to helping me out of a very awkward situation, is satisfied to accept a look at my face as a receipt for his money.

At the hotel counter I learn that Captain Dash is not here, also that there are no vacant rooms in the place. But the man is so perfunctory that I am not satisfied. For this reason I begin a leisurely stroll up the long aisles, between the crowded, small tables where holiday-makers are lunching late. Four jovial-looking faces at one table attract my attention. They are so different from those of these hot-air loving Americans. There is strength and the air of God's open sky about them. Moreover, their speech is British. So I pause and ask if any of them "happen to have met Captain Dash of the *Tramp* to-day?" "Yes," answers one, at once, "he's staying here. I saw him an hour ago. He's in the next room to me." Then he and another give me a closer, half-recognising scrutiny, and the other asks vigorously: "Are you the English writer he's got as purser?"

My rather embarrassed answer is followed immediately by: "Here, sit down, then! Never mind looking for him, join us! We're all British skippers." A chair is fetched. I sit down, blushing at the show they are making of me so good-

heartedly, and one says with a Scots accent: "It's like Burns at the fair, when he lost his own party and hunted the pubs till he found another jolly lot by peeping in at a doorway; and they said, 'Come in, Johnny Peep,' and he did." "Go on, finish the story," say I, as the waiter goes off with my order. "Oh, I don't know any more. Do you?" "Yes." "Tell us," puts in another. So I begin: "Towards morning one of the party suggested that each one should write a verse, but not sign it; that the verses should go into a hat, be shaken up, then read, and the writer of the one that got most votes should receive half-a-crown from each of the others, whilst the writer of the worst should pay for a bottle of wine." "And who won?—Burns, of course!" "Yes. He wrote:

'Here am I, Johnny Peep,
I saw three sheep,
And these three sheep saw me.
Half-a-crown a-piece
Will pay for the fleece,
And so Johnny Peep goes free.'

"Then they asked if he was Burns. He said: 'Yes'; and they made him drunk in honour of the occasion."

This is greeted with British gusto and such remarks as: "He's got us! By jiminny, he has!

We'll have to pay for his lunch now and make him drunk! "

By-and-bye the one who first spoke to me says he is going to spend the evening and night with a friend in a suburb, so he will have his room transferred to me. This is done when we break up. I write a note, have it placed in the pigeon-hole with Captain Dash's key (he and his son are out), then procure some newspapers and go into the lounge to read and rest. From seven to eight o'clock I take a walk to study a little further Philadelphian street-life at night. On my return I am informed that Captain Dash's key and my note are still there. I have supper, do more reading, enquire again at the counter, find that the keys and my note are gone; but no word is left for me.

Morning: As I enter the restaurant part of the hostelry (how deserted and different from last night!) I see father and son sitting at breakfast. They see me, so I join them. Questions are asked and explanations tried. They "left the 'Parade' half-an-hour before it was over," looked for me, could not find me, thought I had gone away on "my own," and bothered no further. I think of the note and some other points, see where pieces of the puzzle are missing and say no more. I like

the son too well to let him know what I think of the affair.

From a local newspaper I clip: "Some 250,000 spectators watched the show go by, and through this human lane went that motley aggregation, that welsh-rabbit dream, that mid-winter circus, that rainbow on a rampage known as the 'Shooters' Parade'—marching, posing, dancing, pirouetting, turning the town upside down with merriment as the New Year drew its first breath and the snow came down, and the wind made one shiver in a heavy overcoat."

Later on we return aboard. The *Tramp* goes at once to the elevators, and under the streams of wheat that come down the pipes, one can actually see her go deeper into the water. Here, at a quayside, the men receive a few dollars each, according to custom; and to-night, also in keeping with tradition, the majority of them will each do his little best to paint a moiety of Philadelphia red.

* * * * *

A delay has occurred in the loading. Another three days have gone by, during the most of which the cook has lain drunk in his bunk, and the steward has had to do his work, without the help of the Duke of Ber-mondsey, who has been

transferred to the deck. There have been blood and broken razors in the fore-castle, and the bosun and the A.B.'s alone know what else. The alert and smiling young Spaniard has persuaded our master to pay him off. Two deck-hands have found occasion to buy themselves out of jail, or "lose their passage," their clothes and what money is due to them. Two stokers have had to be discharged as "medically unfit to go to sea"; and I have replaced my hard, bone-aching bunk boards with wire-netting, for which reason I now sleep better.

Now we are finishing our load at another series of elevators, seven miles (reputedly) below the city. It is forenoon of the last day. A taxi-cab comes for Captain Dash, who turns to me, saying: "Come on, Purser! Come an' take a final look with me! Come an' enjoy yourself. You'll be a long time dead!"

I thank him, have some newspaper articles that I want to send home; and over about four miles we are bumped, jolted, flung up and jerked back along one of the foulest, mud-deep, stony tracks that ever the vileness of man made partially, then left to be called a road. A quicker, surer cure for bile and torpid liver never existed. "And this—is Amer—ica!—Amurica!—One of their oldest

States!—Seven—only seven miles from a big—city!” I get out as best I can between the upheavals. Captain Dash laughs, grips the door-handle and says: “How wonderful the so-so cab’s built to dance like this!” I surmise that it is by travelling along such “roads” that these Americans keep their livers in order and themselves pushful, in spite of all the cocktails they drink, even in “dry”¹ States.

Evening: The ship’s business is completed. We are back on board; and she is lying out at anchor in the stream, awaiting the pilot, and two stokers in place of the discharged ones.

¹ A “dry” state is one that has a law prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquor. But one hears commonly that it is as easy to obtain the “evil” there as in a “wet” state.

CHAPTER IX

An insular American—The Prince's boots—"Sealed" orders—Rumours of raiders—"Cheek"—Reduced to "Chips"—In the raider's latitudes—The tragedy of a joke—Some friendly personalities—Discussions and a pearl—Danger-zone frivolities.

It is Sunday-forenoon. The light breeze has a keen bite, and the sun looks sickly. Winter is abroad, indeed, on and about this flat-banked, muddy river that is so uninteresting from here to its mouth. I am sure the first hundred miles of it never influenced Penn to make his new home by the side of it; after his leafy and picturesque Buckinghamshire that was impossible.

The pilot came aboard soon after I closed my log yester-evening. He might almost be the grandson of the dear, old fellow who brought us up. One thing certain: He will never rise to the sublime service of his aged colleague—at least, not if one may judge him by the free, ready and emphatic opinions that he expressed last night in general conversation. But, then, it is not well to judge him so. He is so young, so cocksure—as youth so often and fatally is—and alas! so

uninformed and so bumptious. No islander was ever more insular than this American. I shall be glad when his duties take him to the upper bridge. Yet, again, it is not fair to say what he may do for some woman, son or daughter, before he reaches the old man's age. Love—not passion—is the alchemy working in life's crucible, turning the lead of human existence into its gold; and it often gets hold of the most unlikely subjects.

A diversion! What an oasis in this desert! The Prince is at the cabin-door, along with a shoe-maker's runner. It appears that he has bought a pair of flash boots with yellow tops and pearl buttons. The price to him is eleven dollars, possibly because instead of paying for them he gave the ship's name.¹ (His wages are £8 10s. a month, "all clear.") The runner was aboard on the same errand, and we thought he had taken the boots, whilst we lay at the first elevator; when the Old Man sent him away, saying: "If that — — nigger's fool enough to wear a pair of

¹ It is a pretty common custom in all ports abroad for a man to run up a bill with a tradesman (providing that the shopman is satisfied as to his being a member of the crew of such-and-such a vessel) and leave him to get his money from the master, which all traders in sailor-town know they can by putting the law in motion.

eleven-dollar, go-to-meeting boots, I'm not fool enough to pay it for him." Now, however, he doesn't want any delay, when on the point of sailing. But he lets his Highness prattle on persuasively in that soft, mealy-mouthed voice so common to the black; till at last, having been amused sufficiently and got in a few of his laughing, biting remarks, the Old Man gives the runner an order on my friend the agent.

Soon after this down comes a tug with the two new stokers, another bouncing young Spaniard and an older, quieter man of the same nationality. They have been secured by the knowledge that we are to call at Gibraltar, where they apparently think they will be able to leave us—shanghaied in a manner. Such are still the ways of some boarding-house-keepers, when getting rid of men who do not know the language of the ship they are joining.

Now the pilot (able enough in his calling, as we soon see) gives us a pleasing release. The anchor is hove up, and away we go, once more for an unknown destination. All we know is that "we are going to an Italian port." The master has told me that even *he* doesn't know; that he sails, and has done since just after the U-boat piracy began, under secret orders which he may not

break till he is out at sea. But I don't believe him—not quite, in this matter especially. For me to do that generally, he has too much fondness for saying misleading things, partially in that laughing, satirical spirit of his, and in part from the usual ship-master's tendency to keep things to himself. He loves a touch of mystery—when he is the mystery-holder. I do not say there is no cause for some secrecy as to where a ship is now bound; but there is no reason for this mystery every time she leaves harbour, especially not towards responsible officers.

Some masters, out of sheer, wooden-headed exclusiveness, won't tell their chief officers the simplest thing, unless compelled to. It was always so, and always will be, I suppose, till human nature changes. They even keep back till the last moment things which it would be better for the officers to know hours or days before-hand. Of course, it is a form of ignorance and suspicion, also of the narrow idea of being *master*, of having information which he alone possesses aboard the ship. Well, we cannot all be wise and broad-minded. We can't all say: "The world is wide; but, thank God, we are wider."

All the time we have been here, rumours have gone about that one or two raiders are unkindly

disturbing the even tenor of merchant craft on the Atlantic—eastern side. Such rumours appear to be mostly in the air of these American east-coast ports, and are, no doubt, set going by a certain well-known and well-understood class of hyphenates. They are even in some American papers from time to time, and one never knows whether they are true or not. We have this in mind as we steam down the river. But does it make any difference to any one's bearing? Not that I can see. On the contrary, I can hear light-hearted remarks on the subject; and if these be but the frothy side of that policy of bluff and bluster that marks so many men (both at sea and ashore) and is only a sign of inherent weakness—well, even so, it is better than long faces and jumpy actions.

Noon, and the younger of the two Spaniards is here, asking for bed and bedding, with a low comedian's smile all over his round face and overlapping to the adjacent parts. He and his compatriot have come aboard almost "as they stood." In the old days windjammer-masters carried slop-chest clothes for the benefit of their own pockets and such men as these, but not beds or bedding. And for a man to come to a steam-tramp's cabin-door for such——! But the Old

Man is in one of his genial moods. He sees humour in the affair, airs his Spanish with the fireman (he can make himself understood pretty well in several languages), and gives him a spare bed from under his own, also an old coat to serve as a blanket.

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At sea—creeping into the Gulf Stream, and so into warmer weather. All yesterday we had a strong nor'-westerly breeze abaft the port beam. This brought heavy sprays, and sometimes the light head of a sea, over the rail and bang against the doors of the saloon, some of the officers' berths, etc. So Captain Dash has decided on the making of weather-screens to fit between the top of the bulwarks and the superstructure. They are to be made of surplus shifting-boards ¹—an inch thick, a foot wide and any length up to twelve feet; and as we don't carry a carpenter, the master and the chief mate have tackled the work, on number three hatch, just below me.

Now the doctors ordered me not to do *any* physical work; but I never could see tools in use without my having a great temptation to handle some of them, and carpentry was one of my recrea-

¹ Used on grain-carriers to divide the holds into compartments, and thus prevent the cargo from shifting.

tions in the strenuous days gone by. Hence I go down to the screen-making. Each one is three feet nine inches wide, and they vary in length from seven to twelve feet, according to where they have to fit. It is forenoon-work with Captain Dash and the mate; because the former sleeps in the afternoon, by habit, and it is the latter's watch below. But restless, "nervy," I cannot let the work alone. As in everything else I take in hand, I am eager to see it done. So I labour on till tea-time or thereabouts.

I say "take in hand": Well, on the second day the master made a mistake in the measurements for one screen. This gave the mate and me—me especially—a not-to-be missed opportunity for such poor chaff and satire as we could muster. The result being that I am now left laughingly to be "Chips" ¹-in-chief, with more of the real work of that rating than I have of purser's; because the mate has left me also; he has found some forenoon-work amongst his paints, and is turning the old *Tramp* from white, red and black to "battle-ship grey" and black.

* * * * *

It is a Saturday. The weather is fine; and to-day we enter the latitudes where we expect to

¹ The ship-board name for the carpenter.

meet the rover, if he happens to be within visible distance of us. Work stops as usual at twelve o'clock. The watch-below go whistling to the galley for their dinner—fresh soup and fresh beef in these times of improved scales of provisions, ice-chests and other material evidences of better times at sea. They chaff with the German-headed cook at the galley-doorway and go to the fore-castle full of merriment, away over the stern yonder. The afternoon they spend as Saturday-afternoons usually are spent—in washing clothes, card-playing for little squares of plug-tobacco, etc.; and at tea time they appear at the galley-door in clean shirts and dungaree trousers. (We are far enough south not to need much in the way of jackets.) With the officers it is about the same.

Sunday—a moderate gale at our heels, but no water coming over the waist, because of the yeoman service of our screens. All is spick and span and cheerfulness. Plum-duff makes its uninterrupted appearance. Certainly a sharp look-out is kept on the bridge; but anxiety is unknown up there, and in the fore-castle there is singing and more of the "Devil's prayer-book," as some Puritan named those fifty-two pieces of fine paste-board, which are said to have been invented for the amusement of a French king.

Thus the days go by—work, eat and sleep in cheerfulness—whilst each man keeps his life-belt handy to his bunk, and each one who is thoughtful sees to it that his bag is packed, roughly ready to jump. All the time a keen watch is maintained night and day, and certain lighting precautions are taken.

* * * * *

We count that we are now west of the raider's hunting-grounds—if there is one on the North Atlantic. It is a lovely morning; and, according to custom, I am on deck half, or three-quarters of, an hour before the master. (He is always up till midnight, reading, if the weather be at all fine; but really because the youngest and least experienced of the officers has the first watch of the night. Whereas I usually turn in by ten o'clock or ten-thirty, unless he happens to be spinning me some of his entertaining yarns.)

Now he appears, pleasantly enough. The breakfast-bell rings. He says jocularly: "Shall we discuss the menu, Purser?" To which I reply in the same vein: "In other words—Go to porridge." I now make my breakfast from that dish of Scots' strength, dourness and high mentality. In a moment his face has put on a look of injury, and he says, in a tone of hurt and some

bitterness: "Now that's nasty. I call that right-down nasty." "What is?" I ask. "That is," says he, "to refer to breakfast as a porridge-pot." "I did nothing of the sort," I answer, rather nettled at his use of this habit, so common in a certain class of mind, of wilfully twisting the opponent's case to fit his attack on it. "What I said was a joke, as any *boy* could see." "It didn't sound like one." "No joke ever does to those who are determined not to take it as one." "That's for me, then?" asks he, more lightly. "If the cap fits," I answer similarly, and add, "When, I wonder, will you be old enough to take a joke as well as give one? You haven't the monopoly, you know; any more than a ship-master is the captain of all men he meets. A wise man varies his bearing according to the men he meets——" "A feather to every wind that blows, eh?" "Certainly, so far as manners, self-respect and that go. You know, you're at one and the same time the most sensitive and satirical man I have met, and neither my experience nor my study of men and women has been limited——" "Here, none of the professional manner, you know—not before breakfast; I couldn't stand that," he puts in, more genially. In the same manner I remark, "It does you good, I think, to show you bits of your-

self now and then; as it does all of us." "Oh, what about you?" "You haven't hesitated at holding up *that* mirror, as *you* see it; because you couldn't avoid doing so with the angel Gabriel, if you were shipmates for a few days. And, you know, you have had no one to show you these little corners for years and years now. But let's go to that porridge, before it loses its edge by getting cool."

He makes for the ladder, returning again to my first remark and once more showing how his sensitiveness was wounded. But, then, he has a bent that way. I follow, still avowing my innocence of offence. He says: "You talked about studying men and women—we'll come back to that presently, specially the 'women' part." There the subject drops; for the saloon-table is not a place of intellectual discussions. Anything in the nature of high mentality is—nay, even the lower slopes of Parnassus are taboo here; where the talk is always either smoking-room stories or ship-board affairs.

After breakfast, however, Captain Dash goes to his new self-set task—*i.e.*, making a crow's-nest. He is too considerate to hoist up a barrel, for the look-out man to stand in, as has been done aboard most merchant-men that have a crow's-

nest. Thus the master, the mate, and one or two more—with the first as designer-in-chief and foreman-in-extraordinary—are fashioning a substantial frame out of two-and-a-half-inch planks, to be presently covered with canvas and the whole painted dark-grey.

It is evening before he recollects the reference to women. But I soon discover, as I have hitherto thought, that feminine psychology is a sealed book entirely to him. The most widely-accepted dictums of the sex, psychically, make him look up in some surprise and questioning. I have noticed that in his general conversation he never refers to woman—that is, by the use of a simile concerning some trait of hers. Except in the flesh and as a “ministering angel,” she is a dead letter to him. We drift from “woman” to women as wives, and after some talk he leaves me this pearl from all the oysters we have opened: “When wives want to alter their husbands, they generally want a change of husbands.” I have reason to believe that he has one of the best; perhaps that and his many years away from women-kind are the causes why he is so benighted as to the less palpable characteristics of the sex, concerning whom he knows only two or three of the many world-wide proverbs.

* * * * *

Now we draw into the real danger-zone, where a submarine may appear at any moment, and again the boats are attended to. Tinned provisions, water and other things that won't spoil are put in, amidst many a joke by the men as they pass the things along from one to another. I sit on the after-end of our islet, listening to them, whilst appearing to read. They hope the Hun will be polite when he comes, and give them time to get their things together. The bosun doesn't want to leave his best sea-boots behind; yet he says he can't wear them all the time, especially as he wishes to wear his old ones out first. So he is laughingly advised to sleep in the best pair, and put them into his bag whenever he turns out.

The Hollander declares that he doesn't care when the so-so Germans come. He has only two good suits of underclothing, and both of them are on his back, says he. As for washing them: He changes places with them every week, so that each one gets its turn next to his skin. The young training-ship A.B.'s vividly expressed concern is to the effect that he hopes "the U-boat as interferes in this passage'll blow sky 'igh an' go to blazes"—all because one of his watchmates

owes him some fifteen shillings, money lent on the last night at first elevator in Philadelphia and lost at cards since we left. I hear that it is to be paid out of the first advance in the next port, and I know how such arrangements end for the most part. Thus the talk, work and laughs continue.

Once more the deep, ocean-blue of the water is gone; a greeny-blue has taken its place. So the boats are slung out at the davits and secured so that they won't swing about. Their painters are passed along for'ard, and all is ready for dropping them into the water; whilst the biscuits, boats' compasses, etc., are kept handy for instant use. Or in an hour or two of smooth water the life-boats may be launched, then hoisted aboard again by a "bridle" in each one, and temporarily secured on a hatch.¹ For this purpose a cargo-derrick is used for each boat; and the advantage lies in the fact that the boats will slide clear of the vessel's rail, whichever way she takes a list. They need no hoisting. They are also detached from the gear by one simple action; whereas lowering from davits often causes the boat to be smashed against

¹ During the whole of the voyage I did not see another tramp with her boats in the same admirable position; although in the past I have often seen small coasters and fishing-craft carrying their boats on the hatches.

the ship's side, or capsized in the same way, if not by the delay of unhooking the davit-tackles.

Moreover, such an arrangement puts the life-boats quite handy to those who have to use them. This is one of the things in which Captain Dash proves himself so excellent a sailor, so quick in thought and unerring in idea whenever the matter concerns his daily life.

Of course, the former keen look-out becomes razor-edged, in the matter of comparison; and, if there is any difference at all, it is sharper by day than by night. This is because, so far as we know, this sort of sea-fox of the homeland-waters does his dirty work by day, and lies quietly under the surface during the night. Every object that comes in sight, near at hand or on the horizon, is scrutinised to the utmost, and is given a wide berth if there is anything suspicious about its appearance.

And still the banter, laughs, jokes, work, sleep, eating and all the general daily *régime* goes on, with a kind of "more days, more dollars," devil-may-care feeling.

CHAPTER X

Out of summer into winter—Persistency—A queer notion, and a better one—At Gibraltar—Unconscionable delay—Anchored at last—Formalities and the bum-boat—Odd thoughts—"Rock" items—A breeze and a smashed boat—Oran—The supporter of the family—An African hail-storm—Unfair advantage—A surprise and a startler.

It is "Saturday-night, Jack's watch below," as Dibdin sang; but I wouldn't give much for the comfort that any man here is getting from his watch below just now—the second dog-watch. Up to this morning we have enjoyed splendid, genial, Azores' weather. Eight or ten hours ago it changed, became rather European, with a touch of the month about it, but only enough to shake one up a little like a cool gust through a warm room. Then, just as we expected to make the landfall, along came a fog. I need not say more on that head. Captain Dash's justifiable expression concerning it is still in my ears; and any attempt on my part after that would be as weak tea on the heels of strong whisky.

Now, nearly eight o'clock, we are roaring along between Cape Spartel and the Spanish side, before a nor'-wester that has blown the fog to smith-

eens, and is now making the sea smoke; in addition it has brought down a very hurricane of rain, through which Spartel light, big and powerful as it is, and only a few miles away, is like a ha'penny candle in a mist-filled barn. How she swerves, runs, seems to pause (merely the illusionary effect of the seas alongside), gather herself together again—hitch up her loins, as it were—and at it again!

As I watch her, whilst I shelter here, fore-side of the house and under the upper bridge, in the dismal blinking of that African light, she reminds me of a lumbering, elderly, farmyard-fighter that has seen the best of its days, but will die rather than give in. And I say to myself: "Go it, old girl! It makes me young and strong again just to watch you! Go it, and I'll put my last shilling on you! Go it!—your pluck's as good as the next's; and handsome is as handsome does!"

Thus she wallows, seethes and goes through the welter of it, smothered in foam fore and aft, whilst the rain hammers down, and so prevents the seas from rising very high. And if it were possible to double her eight and a half knots they would be doubled, because this is reputed to be one of the worst parts of the danger-zone; and naturally so, seeing that a vessel is nearly always

in sight. However, we have the darkness and this gale and the rain to help us, thank goodness.

Now I bethink me: Once more have I struck this African coast in raging weather? What's the inner meaning of it? Is that super-subtle something, that omnipotent and perfect organisation which works behind life, and whereof we now and then get a tantalising, disquieting, yet in a small degree reassuring and illuminating, gleam—is it telling me, by the acknowledged shadow of the event, that this “dark” continent is to furnish me with a grave? I mean am I to die on it?—For when you are gone what matters a grave, except for sanitary reasons?

As for thinking of dying: When you have done it often it is quite a commonplace experience. And it is morbid only if you are morbid. There is nothing unhealthy in contemplating one's own death. Rather is it weak and unhealthy not to do so at proper times.

But the cause of my reflection: Out of the many times I have come within sight of Africa, south, east, north and west, it has always had a sullen, dark and forbidding appearance, or been under such raging weather as this, with the rocky coast-line looking death at us—so far as it was visible—or with a light similar to yonder one,

pip-popping like a Jack-o'-lanthorn in a swampy graveyard.

The *Tramp's* lashing along draws my attention again. In this hurly-burly and onward movement there are fascination, vigour, a sense of the eternal and all the antithesis of death. So, after watching it again for a few minutes, I turn into the cabin, thinking that if I am to die in Africa, all I need do to prolong my life is to keep out of the country.

This sets me cogitating on a story of a man who is supposed to know where he will die; how enemies become aware of this; how he fools them and evades it; till at last he is tired of the game, goes there and finishes, when their reasons for getting him there have petered out. Not a bad bit of spontaneous mental combustion, I say to myself, amusedly. Captain Dash would applaud that; and forthwith I fall to applying the idea in half-a-dozen other ways, whilst smoking the second of the two pipes of tobacco that I'm allowed daily.

We often discuss such literary matters as plots, characterisation, psychic consistency, and even style; these are subjects he likes now and then, and is good enough to let me talk. It was in this connection that he one day asked me: "If you'd

had your choice, which would you rather have been—a genius or a scholar? ” It was asked in a manner that I cannot describe, and I left it there.

Tarifa light now blinks weakly to the north of us. The gale, rain and cold continue. My pipe is out. I have finished shuffling the cards of the man who knows where he will die, but won't go there; and, as my cabin-mate will be on the bridge all night, I turn in, feeling how helpless I am in such circumstances and in these days of premature, physical degeneracy.

(Making land or going along it our master is always on the alert, up for hours and down for minutes; getting cat-sleeps, or none, for two or three nights and days at a stretch. True, this is fairly common amongst masters of ocean-going craft, and it makes me think that every chief officer should have a master's certificate—as many of them have, for that matter—and should take equal responsibility with the master when making land or coasting, each of them relieving the other, watch-and-watch, as the officers do at sea. Such a change would be for the good of both men and ships. Because many a disaster to home-coming craft is due to the master's overstrained condition.)

Morning: Our three-weeks' passage is over.

We have less wind; but the air is raw and full of moisture; there is a shiver in every look outside. Yet this is sunny Spain! The land of fruit, sun-burnt faces, love ballads, fine feminine eyes, and some national and personal characteristics that may as well be left unmentioned. We are bobbing about just within the bay and close under the bleak-looking "Rock," some seven and twenty of us, including a couple of Norwegians, a Spaniard, two Italians and a Hollander.

It is eight-bells; we have been here since six o'clock, and it looks as if we shall be here at six to-night. There is only one examination boat; she is in charge of a Naval Reserve lieutenant, and goes leisurely and haphazardly from ship to ship, with an apparent preference for the foreigners. Now she will drop away from one black hull and straight to the next one close by; then she will fall clear, turn her nose half-around the compass, looking for her next objective, and out of the crowd she goes to a vessel that lately came in and is hanging about on the fringe. Thus the slow, exasperating game goes on. Other sheep join the flock, almost as fast as the odd ones are told off either for the pin-fold up in the bight yonder, or to go on their ways to where the wolves are awaiting them.

Noon: And we still muster a score. When we

came in, there were only seven others awaiting examination. Now our master, in very justifiable anger, noses his way out of the crowd, takes up a position on the fringe, towards the Spanish side, and says that so-so officer can come to us here, or go to where he won't feel such biting weather as this. He surmises that the man must be a "Rock Scorpion,"¹ to do the work in the way he is doing it. I think it is a scandal to the Service.

Towards the end of the afternoon-watch we get a belated turn; and if the officer who passes us is the one who does all this work, then I don't wonder at a delay that is criminal, considering our lack of ships for food-carrying. A more sleepy and indifferent-looking young man I have not seen in such a post.

Now we creep up the bay, looking for a good anchorage, getting a view of the town and harbour as we go in and feeling a strong return of this morning's eagerness to know the state of the war-news. We are also asking for a pilot all the time, because the real anchoring ground is as full as is good for the vessels that are there.

In the interval a bum-boat fusses up alongside,

¹ Scallywags of British and Spanish blood born at Gibraltar, or born there of Spanish parents and brought up as British. They have a bad name there, just as the Maltese have all along the Mediterranean; but, naturally, they cannot all be bad, any more than the Maltese are.

not the old-time thing of oars and sail, but a smart motor-boat, the chief of which sits amidships and gives orders to his two helps. He may not come aboard and act as pilot; but "there are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with butter." He knows the slight predicament we are in; so, after a few preliminaries, during which we hungrily see him handling some newspapers, he, with an eye to preference, calls out to our master that a safe berth and good ground are to be had "between that P. an' O. an' the oil-tanker." Then he shouts: "You follow me, cap'n;" and away he froths ahead. But now that we are up at close quarters with things, Captain Dash sees what he thinks is a better berth, and there we go.

When the anchor is down, the bum-boatman drops alongside again and gets an appointment to serve the ship, at five shillings a head for the men, *ad. lib.* for the officers, and for the purser all that he has money to pay for. But he may not serve us till that quarantine flag comes down from the fore; so he hangs by until the port doctor has been, had a muster made, looked us over, and said: "All right. Carry on." Then come the newspapers, in return for which we give orders for fruit, tobacco, etc.

Our next visitor is the ship's agent, with what letters there are for us—chiefly a large bundle of official things for the master, and long faces of disappointment for nearly every one else. The general surmise is that the vessel that carried our letters from America must have been torpedoed. Now we learn that during last night's gale in the straits, two steamers, tearing along lightless because of submarines, collided and damaged each other badly, but managed to get safely in here; also that the breeze caused several vessels to drag their anchors and either foul others or go on to the beach yonder. Another matter of importance is that we are to go to Castellamare, in the Bay of Naples. Now we *know* our port of discharge, and I hear it said at once that "The Chief is sure to have friends there"; which turns out to be correct, so he says, although he hasn't "been there these ten or twelve years."

Evening is at hand. A bitter northerly wind sweeps down from the hills, on one of which San Roque stands up, white but becoming duller. I look back at "the Rock," think how individual it is in its formation, position, importance, etc., see in it a geological and a geographical representation of the really outstanding man, and I smile to myself at the thought of how impossible it

would have been for the psychologically ignorant Germans to have kept it peacefully a quarter of the time that we have done. In this optical survey I notice that there are still nine or ten steamers down at the examination ground, not one of which ought to have been there since noon, and the most of whom will have to stay overnight, because no examinations are made between sunset and sunrise, during which hours the port is closed.

To-night we have the gramophone again. It is a good instrument, as such things go; but any mechanical repetition soon palls on me. Oh, what blessings of satisfaction are the perquisites of inexperience and blunted sensibility! So, except for three or four items and the Hawaiian ones, I am glad when the box is closed.

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Again it is Saturday-evening. We have been here six days. What a shameful "hold-up"!—And all for orders, a gun (the mounting, etc., of which was already in place), four hundred tons of coal, fresh water and some provisions; all of which could easily have been done in three days, and should have been done in two. During this time the daily crowd at the examination ground has varied but little, neither has the

official delay in passing the vessels. Captain Dash tells me that the place is almost run by the Naval Reserve, and that the amount of red tape is enormous, which is all the more surprising, seeing that the most of these officers and officials are really Merchant Service men. Or is it another proof of the widely acknowledged, wooden-headed tyranny of the average Jack-in-office?

At any-rate, during our stay here I have computed that the delay to cargo-carrying craft (ninetenths of which are British) is equal to the daily delivery of over five thousand tons. Thus: Put the average needless delay per vessel at three days and the number of vessels at twelve, with a net tonnage each of two thousand five hundred (they range from about fifteen hundred to eight thousand). This gives us thirty-six days' work, passage and loading for every official day here; or the daily delivery of over five thousand tons of cargo.

Another rather unpleasant fact is the presence in this anchorage of a merchant fleet of fifty to seventy craft from day to day. Last Sunday, the day we arrived, there were close on eighty sail here; and on no day since then has there been less than fifty-six. The officers tell me that there is equal delay in certain other examination ports.

And I ask: Should it be?—especially when there is such an outcry about a shortage of shipping, and when the country is being told that the profiteering cost of living is largely an outcome of this shortage. Stirred to the possibility of doing some good in the matter I sit down at once and write a letter on this subject to a journalist-friend.

Of Gibraltar itself in these war-times I make no written note; it were not wise to do so. Already I have felt the weight of the Censor's hand, found it a heavy one and think it equally unjust—in some cases, at least. I don't know yet what it may be on books that deal with war-subjects; but journalistically my experience is that it lacks the wisdom of consistency, discrimination and a proper knowledge of daily facts.

Here, however, are a few items, ours and general. There is lying here an English steam tramp whose master's wife has sailed with him since the Germans began their piracy, and refuses to cease her practice. They are middle-aged persons. Our elder Spanish fireman has made himself a nuisance by pestering for unearned money to give to his wife, who comes across from Algeciras; and an engineer has been paid off and sent home, with malaria from a previous voyage. A Newfoundland skipper has brought his ninety-

ton brigantine through the Atlantic winter, with a hundred and eighty tons of salted cod aboard. He has been here six weeks, and has not yet succeeded in selling his fish at a fair price. One day two Spaniards came alongside in a handful of a boat. They had a basket of small, fresh fish, to the weight of about seven or eight pounds, for which they asked "a sovereign," and paddled away to a liner when they were offered what would have been a big price to them—a shilling a pound. Oranges are a penny each, and tobacco (This is a tobacco-free port.) is half as much again as it was before the war.

I turn from my notes to write an article on Merchant Service life at sea in war-time, ready to send ashore in the agent's boat to-morrow. In the midst of it Captain Dash comes in, from a business talk with The Chief. He asks what I am writing. I tell him. He says: "If you put in anything about this delay, the censor'll throw it into his paper basket, you bet. They tell me ashore that everything's censored before it goes out of the place." This makes me fire up, as anything in the nature of tyranny has always done. I ought to have been of Cromwell's time; I should either have gained distinction—of some sort and degree—on his side, or have lost my

head by the other side getting hold of me before the big upheaval. My idea of an English censor's licence is the stamped formula: "Not to be published." And, partially in defiance of any censor there may be here, I give an account of this shipping delay.¹

Sunday-afternoon: To-day our fresh water came, and now we are rounding "the Rock"—so bleak and formidable on its seaward side—to go along the Spanish coast, within territorial waters; but ever with the same keen look-out kept, for we don't doubt but that, if "Mr. Hun" should come up on the outer side of us, he would not hesitate to let drive.

* * * * *

After a forced sort of loitering passage to Cape de Gat, we turned our heels on it at sunset yesterday and made a dash (a dash at eight-and-a-half knots per hour!) for the African coast. Well, this is winter. We all know what the Gulf of Lyons is at this time of year, and we got it last night—a nice little moderate gale that brought along a lop of a sea on our beam, and made the *Tramp* roll so that No. 1 lifeboat broke loose on No. 2

¹ That article was never delivered. Of course, it may have been lost in transit, as many postal packets are now-a-days. But it is curious that the same fate befell the letter to a friend mentioned on p. 146.

hatch and kicked up bobs-a-dinah till it was re-secured; but in such a damaged condition that we are heading for Oran, to get a serviceable boat there. One lifeboat is not enough to be at sea with in these days. The place is now heaving into sight, with the coast-line high, dark and forbidding east and west of it, and I wonder if I shall ever strike this continent in a sunny hour?

An examination-craft comes along, is satisfied with our credentials, allows a pilot to board us, and we enter a narrow harbour that has been made by the building of a breakwater from a headland, not a quarter-mile in length, and parallel with the coast. When we are moored, and Captain Dash is going down to the boat, I ask if his son can come ashore with me?—an afternoon's holiday for him and company for me. I am referred to the chief officer. The request is granted, and away we go, unquestioned at the quay, by horse-drawn tram-car through winding streets, squares, places and parallelograms, zig-zag, to the Place des Internationales in the centre of the elevated town.

Here we dismount and make the track that is most common to seafarers after a month or so afloat—*i.e.* a bee-line for a barber's, with a request for the free use of his comb and scissors.

Once more as other men are—in appearance—we come forth, make a peregrinating survey of the main streets, arrive at the conclusion that the place is just a first-class North African town, kept clean and attractive by its French authorities, and quite a good place in which to make a stay. We have tea, read the news of the past two days, then go up the principal street to buy curios, commissioned and personal.

Whilst we are standing at a shop-window, intent on the things within, I feel a gentle tugging at a corner of my jacket. On looking down I see a small, round, smiling, good-natured, unwashed, brown face, topped by a nondescript rag of a dirty cap—not a fez; then a brown neck, a once blue zouave-like jacket, embroidered along the edge as usual, a dirty cotton shirt, a pair of ditto Mooresque breeches, out of one leg of which there extends a mud-splashed brown leg and foot, and out of the other a straight piece of wood some six or eight inches in length and about the thickness of a stout broom-handle.

The brown, dirt-marked fingers still hold on to my jacket. The wooden stump is raised, and patted with a blacky-brown fist that holds a sort of sugar-stick, taken from between his gleaming white teeth as I looked down. The

smile broadens; the stump goes down again, and out come his two little fat hands in the most whimsical and humorous-looking supplication for alms that I have ever seen from China to the Baltic.

Regardless of the third officer's laughing caution that "the little beggar's probably running alive," I stoop down, make some examination of the substitute-leg and its natural upper part, see that it is quite honest, and give him a franc, in small paper denominations,¹ saying: "Here. He must have a heart of stone that could say No to *you*." It is a half-franc for his misfortune, and a half for the way he plays the mendicant. He smiles me a double payment, salaams in stately Moorish fashion, raises his head again and goes stumping off to a girl of about ten years, who stands a little distance off and has watched the whole scene.

On turning my head from him I notice a gendarme who seems to be interested in the affair. He, too, smiles, and looks at me in a way that

¹ There were no silver pieces in circulation. The paper franc bore the stamp of the national authority; but every Chamber of Commerce under French law was then allowed to issue paper money for every denomination from fifty down to five centimes. But, of course, the amount of the output was limited by the central authority.

makes me go to him and ask if he knows anything concerning little Wooden-leg. "*Oui, m'sieur*," and he laughs, shrugging his shoulders, and tells me that the youngster (now about six years of age) had his foot and a bit of leg cut off by a tram-car wheel in this street some fifteen months ago. Since then or, rather, since he first appeared with the wooden stump and that irresistible smile and manner of his, he has supported his family—father, mother, and four older brothers and sisters. The girl going down the street there with him is the sister who keeps him company for the time being and takes care of the money he gets. And, adds my informant, with another laugh, if the war is over soon, and the English and American tourists come back before he becomes *blasé*, he will make the family's fortune in two years, and they will either set up in business, or go out of town and live in a villa.

How I wish I had a camera! I would give that boy five francs for a snapshot of him, and another five for the smile if it happened to be there at the time. But such things are not allowed in public. So I smother my disappointment and go back to my companion, saying to myself once more: "Sweet are the uses of adversity," and reflecting on a wooden leg's possible advantages in business,

and how it would have been used by Dickens; who, of all writers whose work I know, would have made the best of the theme.

Darkness has settled down, and to our consternation we have discovered that we cannot go aboard again till morning. No boats, except those of authority, are allowed about the harbour after dark. Even if we could get a boat, by any means, we should be shot at by the sentries. "Nice," we say, as we look at one another.

At my instigation we are looking into another window, that of a dealer in articles of Moorish make. With no warning whatever a deafening peal of thunder breaks out, seemingly just above our heads; another follows immediately, accompanied by a vivid flash of lightning; and right away comes hail, like grain down a warehouse-shoot. I step into the shop. My friend remains under the sun-shade, looking at the things that have no interest for him. I go from one object to another, pricing articles that I don't intend to buy; not because I lack interest in them, but first to get sanctuary from the storm, then in a feeling of derision and something which I cannot stop to analyse. I would buy some of the things if I had the money to spare, for they take my fancy; but the prices for old, battered, Moorish

weapons, embroidered leather-work, pottery and the like are about three times what they are at home. Another pernicious effect of well-to-do tourists' ways, American and European generally.

Yet why should I be angry and scornful (except that the sales-woman, with this embracing, seemingly everlasting and certainly embarrassingly-sweet smile of hers, takes me for an unusually courageous American tourist) because the owner of these things is trying to get all he can for them? Greed is a contemptible characteristic; but, after all, these articles are not necessities of life. They are ornaments for the artistic and fools to buy. And if there be an eternal lacking of the one, with an equally durable shortage of art-obtaining francs amongst them, then the other must be coerced to make up the deficiency, even if only as a slight return for that favour which Fortune is always said to confer upon them.

The storm has lasted a good half-hour, during which that smile has deepened somewhat (if she were a man, I should say it broadened) and relaxed a little; also our third officer has sheltered with some other persons just inside the doorway. Now the thunder is far-off and the hail has nearly ceased. So, as some reward for the physical staying-power of that smile and for our sanctuary,

I buy a small piece of pottery and a very Mooresque purse for friends, likewise a serviceable knife for myself.

Now we go to look for supper and beds, shivering in this North African night as we slush through the piles of melting hailstones, and try to evade the considerable rivulets that pour over the stones of this steep street and into the thoroughfares on its lower side here. How grotesque the stunted palms look, half-covered with the hail!

Whilst we are enjoying the soup in a big and almost empty restaurant, in comes Captain Dash. Being a man on whom "there are no flies" (to use one of his favourite Americanisms, although our "wide awake" and some others would do as well), he sits down quietly on the other side of our little table, orders soup and asks why we are not aboard. We tell him the reason. He enquires if we obtained town-passports at the Prefecture on the quay. We say No, and look blankly at him. He replies, in the same quiet, emphatic way (one of his very best mannerisms, and far too much neglected):

"Then you're liable to be taken prisoners and shot off-hand. Oh, you needn't stare your eyes out, though it would save the squad the trouble of bandaging 'em. If they get wind of you to-night

they'll have you before the cock crows. And, by-the-way, I don't know which of you it is; but one of you's got a scent strong enough for a snub-nosed pug to pick up." His son blushes conviction. I am too old, and have too much hair, for barbers' wiles. Then the master orders wine and adds seriously: "I should sing low, if I were you. I've had to get a pass—look. They're strict; and they won't let you forget it, if they catch you."

All the same we enjoy our supper. When it is over Captain Dash tells the waiter to make out one bill. I, with proper insistence, say No, and instance that I brought his son to supper, as it appeared to be hopeless for me ever to expect to get the father. No use; it is in cases of this sort, as well as others that his Devonian stubbornness shows its burly head. He seems to have the upper hand of the waiter, too; so his forceful kindness has to have its way. He leaves us, with a whispered reminder as to our keeping quiet, and saying he is going to spend the evening with the ship's agent, who is getting us a boat.

Presently we make a dash through the bitter wind and rain for a kinema show, slantingly across the wide street. When the lights flash up after the first set of films, we see Captain Dash and his friend in a "box" within a few yards of

us. After the show we go out together, and the master's last, low words are, whilst the agent's face is the other way: "Sing low. If you're taken in the night, send for me." And they disappear around a corner, anxious, like ourselves, to get out of this most un-African weather. Five minutes later we stand and stare blankly at each other in the lobby of our caravanserie, with the simultaneous reminder on our lips: We don't know where he's staying! However, he counselled quietude. So quietly we fill in and sign the police-forms (much like ours at home) and go to our rooms in the same manner.

CHAPTER XI

Italy—A glance back—Castellamare and passports—A question of francs—What a motley team!—Away: on an Italian road!—Rags on high—Ten centimes for luck—Beggars—A ruse—The road abandoned—Sorrento—The square on a saint's day—Villa Crawford.

“GOOD-MORNING, sir. Capri away the port bow!” says a passing apprentice, with emphatic satisfaction in his low voice and on his beaming face. This is as I step out of the cabin into the sunny air of this genial, Mediterranean winter-morn. I gaze ahead and see the island, high and bold, with the southern arm of the bay stretching away to starboard; and, as was just now meant by the tone and look of the apprentice, I feel grateful to Providence for having brought us safely through three days and nights steaming in one of the worst parts of this U-boat-infested sea.

How we came here I may not tell—not in words for publication; although it goes without saying that not only do the German naval authorities know it well enough, thousands of persons in ports at home know it also. The men who steer

these tramps from port to port are illiterate enough, heaven knows; but they remember the courses that are kept and the main points and headlands *en route*. They likewise know that these ways are extraordinary and quite different from what they were before the cowardly U-boats started their piratical career. And these men have tongues; they are not sworn to secrecy, nor would it matter if they were; they mingle with other persons ashore, abroad here and at home, and they talk of these things that are so uncommon to their daily lives. Still the censor says, in effect—and it is the effect that bothers one: No matter what half the people are saying, you shall not publish it.

But, whilst the *Tramp* is making her slow way to yonder sanctuary, and we still watch this lovely sea closely for a possible appearance of the enemy, I must glance back.

Captain Dash was “pulling our legs” about the passport matter in Oran; at least, it seemed so to us, when we walked across the quay next morning and came aboard without let or hindrance. Of course, I don’t say what might have happened in the way of arrest, and perhaps even trial, if we had been challenged. That, however, did not occur. So away we came, with a big, serviceable,

second-hand life-boat on No. 2 hatch—at first-hand price, and some over to pay the vendor for obliging us in the hour of our need. Oh, these traders, these buyers-and-sellers of other persons' productions! I would wipe them off the face of the earth, as a curse and an abomination. No man should trade in what he did not produce, except as the hired agent of a producer, and at a fixed price and no commission.

But enough of this here. I want to say that no sooner were we aboard, and the moorings were being cast off, than I turned violently on myself for not having had the wit to take little Wooden-leg to a photographer's, and get a likeness of him that way, as I could not take one. How wise we are when our wisdom is but chagrin and impotence!—worse than the snows of yester-year; for they came at an appointed time, served a definite purpose, and went their way when their end was attained.

* * * * *

Castellamare: Yesterday we moored here early in the afternoon, in a harbour of such a size that the *Tramp* dominates it and seems to look down on it, like a model-yacht in a household bath. But we are not broadside to the quay. With two anchors out ahead we were hauled to within a

ship's length of the quay, and moored there, stern on. So a boat must be had to go ashore in, and no one except the master might do that until passports were granted; hence, as I heard here and there, with a certain significance of tone, not even The Chief could go and see his friends till passports were obtained. However, as the cargo is for the Italian Government, we flew their flag at the fore, and so gained importance in the eyes of the township. Next best thing to our safe arrival is a copy of *The Times* straight from home. It went around like a baby at an elderly spinster's meeting.

To-day, (it is night and I have the cabin to myself) after waiting till I was sick of it, I induced the ship-chandler's runner to go with me to the passport office and help me in obtaining my ticket-of-leave from the confinement of this twenty-five feet square islet. He is a brown-eyed, dark-skinned, black-whiskered fellow of some thirty-six years, an unpleasant mouth, and such English as makes one wary of trusting him. (The more fluent a native's English is in any sailor-town abroad, the more wily, seasoned and less to be trusted he is generally.) All the way to office, whilst we waited there (And, oh, what paragons of promptness and business-like methods

our half-asleep authorities are in comparison! Ye gods of unction, let me lay it to my soul!); going from room to room and back, from officer to officer and back, till one felt like throwing up the silly game and sitting aboard for the next fortnight—during those two hours and the return journey to the vessel that runner talked of the war; the procrastination and thick-headedness of Italian officials; the “awful cost of livin’” due to the war, etc.

But what I least liked was the nasty, subtle, insinuating, under-current or set against the war as a defensive action on the part of the Entente nations. This stirred up my antagonistic failings. Then I learnt that the real, moving sore was the fact that in some fourteen days’ time *he* will have to join the military. Then scorn got the better of my dignity (not that I ever had much of the latter, according to some folks I know), and brought him to this finale: “If my wife an’ children had as mush as your English Tommy’s I shou-dent care!” So, after all it was a matter of francs, not of patriotism, or any abstract sense of national right and wrong; because his wife and children have never had such a weekly income as the average British soldier’s is, or the workman’s was before the war.

Happily my attention was drawn from him to the team of a passing waggon. Such a conglomeration I had never seen before. It was composed of a big, cream-coloured bullock, a small, lean horse and a donkey that was tall enough to have come from Egypt. The bullock was on one side of the pole, the horse on the other, and the donkey on the near side of the horse.

On my return with the passport and the information to the chief officer that he would have to march the ship's company (the master and me excepted) to the Prefecture, or go without passports and stay aboard, I learnt that half the men were ashore on the previous evening, and came back unchallenged and mostly drunk. Yet the authorities are said to be very strict on this point, and to fine every man forty francs every time he breaks the law. If they had only caught our fellows that night, I should think Captain Dash correct in his opinion that officialdom is more keen on getting the fines than in helping to keep the law.

Morning, our second one here, fine and sunny down in this harbour and ashore there; but misty and cold-looking on the snow-capped mountains that back the hills behind the town. I am on the point of going ashore, not to see

Castellamare; I saw enough of the long strip of a place yesterday on my way to the office of the chief-of-police and back. Neither am I going in the direction of Pompeii; many years ago I saw the squalid country thereabouts, and I hear it is still the same. My first objective is to find a photographer, or a chemist who does photography, and there leave my films to be developed; whilst I go a-wandering along the cliff-road yonder, out of the narrow, dirty, hill-and-harbour-bound town, away westwards, to the clean, open country, the mountains and the unknown. Having some strength in my limbs again, the vagabond spirit is back as strong as ever.

With a light mackintosh over my left shoulder and a stick in the right hand, I am about to set out, when Captain Dash suggests that the ship-chandler (who is present) will take my films to Naples and get them done there, " 'specially as there's no Kodak's in this one-horse show." The man so readily falls in with the accommodating idea, that I am grateful. He is going at once to Naples. I don't wish to go there, have seen it before, and would rather go Sorrento-way. So I write a note to the developer, tie the note to the rolls, give the little bundle to the man, and make tracks for the ladder, with Captain Dash's half-

satirical words following me: "Keep your pop-gun handy, and mind the brigands. There isn't much cash about, you know, for any of that ransoming business; but we'll do our best, providing you don't get into trouble to make 'copy.'"

When fairly clear of the town and out along the road I find the latter a veritable apple of Ishkahar. So fair, so enticing from the bay there; at close quarters so foul and impassable to the person on foot. As to seeming fairness without and rottenness within, it is nearly as bad as Stamboul was before the scavenger-dogs were replaced by better means. The road itself is from three to six or seven inches deep with light-grey mud. There is no pathway. Pedestrians are apparently unknown, and I am the only one to be seen. All else go on wheels, in vehicles of one sort or another; yet, heaven knows, on a decent highway I would far rather have my feet than any one of *their* conveyances. All the same, they ride by, above the mud. And what boots it that for the most part they are in rags and tatters, and all their gaily caparisoned nags are sorry things? *They ride. I walk*, and it seems to be the joy of some of them to splash past me as near as they can. My shore-finery and foreign appearance, and the facts that I am alone and on foot, appear to

be as irresistible to them as a fine amateur yacht to a Thames bargee.

Well, being now past strenuous opposition I betake me to diplomacy, and have so far eluded them. On the inner side of the road there is a tramway, raised about a foot above the road; this and the low, broad, rampart sort of wall on the outer side have been my salvation from the mud and the vindictive splashes—except once. An occasional car came along. I had to make a dash for the wall. No shallow in the mud was handy; so I needs must make the best of it, then return to the grass and weed-grown track and clean my boots. Now they seem to have been white-washed.

As to these tram-cars—overhead-electric the system is: I was told in Castellamare that the cars ran to Sorrento. But no one mentioned the distance there, neither did I ask. I knew only that Sorrento lay out along this road, had got a glimpse of it from the bay, felt that it was a place for me to see, and wanted the road—the way there and the freedom of my feet. Now I have the road—and am determined to be off it immediately a car comes in my direction. Such an abomination of a road I never saw till now.

Presently I slip off the edge of the tramway;

my foot goes into the mud again, happily not deep. On regaining my balance I see something shining in the hole my foot has made, pick it up, find that it is a ten-centimes piece, wipe it and pocket it for luck.

Still I go forward, pass an odd house here and there, from some terrace or flat roof of which big, ugly, mongrel-looking dogs bark at me. This reminds me of the old doggerel rhyme:

“ Hark! Hark! Hark! The dogs do bark;
The beggars are coming to town.
There are some in rags, and some with bags,
And there's one in a velvet gown.”

Well, I have met enough rags so far. And, lo! I at once meet the beggars—odd pedestrians (the road is fairly decent now), every other one of whom makes at me with outstretched hand, palm upwards. I give to the women—three of them so far—wondering if I am a sort of representative of the “one in a velvet gown.” Then, at a deserted bend in the road, a young fellow comes up in the same manner. I say: “No,” and make to pass him. He steps in my way, with a fist clenched menacingly. Instantly, remembering a trick that once saved me, between twelve and one o'clock in the morning and near the Elephant and Castle in London, I pass my stick

swiftly to the left hand, dart the right one to the back of the hip on that side, snarl through my nose: "You devil!" and have the satisfaction of seeing my would-be molester sprint away for his life, over the tramway, up the steep hillside and out of sight. Inwardly I apologise to the United States, and smile to myself for a moment; then wonder what I should have done if the fellow had attacked me whilst the stick was in my left hand, and the mackintosh encumbered that arm.

I resume my journey, now feeling the warmth of the day, and thinking of the "sweet little cherub that sits up aloft and looks out for the life of poor Jack"; also of what certain friends of mine say: That wherever I go, alone or with others, something is sure to happen. Well, thanks be to Providence, nothing special has happened to the *Tramp* yet. But, then, nothing in the shape of wreck ever came to a vessel whilst I was in her.

To my relief along comes a tram-car. I climb in, find that the fare (increased because of war-time) for the ten miles from Castellamare to Sorrento is one franc, thirty centimes; and I soon come to the conclusion that the scenic beauty of it is worth twenty times that amount as a soul-warmer. Let me confess. My eagerness for the

road and wooden-headedness in not asking questions in Sorrento have led me to walk along the only bad and uninteresting part of the road. Presently I notice that many smart-looking, keen-eyed military officers are using these trams, to carry them up and down from village to village.

Some American tourist once said: "See Naples and die," which, looked at in one way (and more than one way is permissible in every such case), was not complimentary to the splendid city that gleams in the sunshine across this bay that is blue under certain skies, yet not more than half so blue as the painters make it. However, I say see Sorrento and live—live to find a new and benefiting pleasure in life by thinking and telling others of it; better still, by discovering new ideals as an outcome of seeing it. But the ideals won't be any use either to you or to others if you leave them as the man in the parable did his one talent. Very few things are of service in this world unless they be brought to the mill of effort.

After passing through three or four villages and seeing a continual recurrence of orange and lemon groves with fruit green, half-ripe and ripe, also vine and olive terraces on the slopes of the hills, both above and below the tramway, we arrive in the what appears to be Sorrento's main

square, the Piazza Tasso. I alight, see a statue, go to it, find that it is one to the poet himself, read that this was his birth-place, and make a proper obeisance to the effigy, with my mind on *Jerusalem Delivered*. Now I turn to examine the scene generally. The square is about half-an-acre in extent—probably a little more one way—and apparently this is a saint's day.

(An official in Castellamare has told me that in the Romanist calendar one-third of the days of the year are allotted to saints—*i.e.* are holidays; also that the priests are far too numerous for there to be much business or any spare money about. In other words that the priests and the holidays are the ruination of Italian commerce, especially in the southern half of the country.)

The place is filled with people, old and young, male and female, all in gay attire and merry mood. At the present moment I can see seven priests, high and low, moving sedately, smilingly through the crowd, and taking obeisance on both sides as they go. Two of them pass close to me; and one—of the higher sort, by his garb—stares hard at my face, with an expression in his eyes that seems to say he would optically compel me to make obeisance. But, outside of convention, I bow only to quality of brain and heart in men,

to women and to a certain name and symbol. So the stony, militant stare gets one of defiance, goes by in apparent resentment; and I find myself besieged by half-a-dozen guides and drivers of small, low, gaily-decorated conveyances, with the word "Americano" flung at me by all. "No! *Inglice!*" I say, and select the most open-faced and big-eyed of them—a youth—to guide me to Villa Crawford.

On our way we pass through Corso Crawford, and I reflect: "Here is fame! Who shall say now that a man hath no honour in his own country? For he made this largely his country. And if he was not of the first water; he was, at any-rate, better than the majority."

At the house I am disappointed. Only a big, dark, handsome and black-moustached custodian is here. He looks me up and down with what appears to me to be suspicion in the corners of his eyes. He knows no English. My Italian consists of about six words, all of which are useless here. Still the guide and I contrive to make him understand my errand and what I am—at least, he seems to grasp those two facts and smiles accordingly, showing a fine set of strong, white teeth. He takes me down the garden, around the handsome building, and on further to the balus-

trade, sheer above the blue bay. Possibly he suspects my designs too much to admit me to the inside of the villa. Thus I go away, having paid my respects so far as I can, thinking how shamelessly we have beggared and cheapened the word "villa," how our borrowing and application of it has made us seem to be just a nation of lath and plaster. "To what base uses," I mutter on my way up to the gate; "Caesar dead and turned to clay may stop a hole to keep the wind away."

CHAPTER XII

A major-domo and information — Studying character — Broad-sides — A verbal engagement — Buying mementoes — More character-studying — Captain Dash and my purchases — Castellamare's mean streets and a "cake house" — An outing party — Merchant Jack and a "carriage" — Bread and garlic — "Ze bes' room."

THE guide takes me to a large, residential hotel near by, where I am shown into a room in which I find two elderly lady-visitors, one old one and the American twang. The last-named is nine-tenths from one person, and the opinions and flow of words brought forth in it drive me out to the lobby. Here I discover one with whom I can talk — a venerable major-domo, with shaven upper lip and chin, the capacious mouth of good-nature, and white side-whiskers nearly a foot long. From him I learn that before the war this hostelry would have had from twenty to thirty English-speaking boarders at this time of year; now it has but five, and has not exceeded seven during the past two years. It is a fair sample of the numerous, similar houses in the township, which formerly lived and thrived apace on tourists.

A gong goes, and my informant ushers me into a dining-room about fifteen feet square. There are small substantial tables in each of the four corners, a round one in the centre bearing a vase of flowers, and one in the recess of the long window, opposite to the doorway, all covered with spotless linen. I am conducted to the latter, sit with my back to the window, and at once see the three ladies come in. The one of much talk—a tall, strong-looking, matronly woman of fifty or fifty-five—comes forward to the table on my left, her scrutinising gaze on me all the time. She sits in the chair that is parallel with mine; she is dressed in quaker-grey, and I would wager that she is from New England. One of the other two does the same at the table to my right; the third goes to the one on my right-front, behind the door. These two are in black, and considerably older than the one who continues to deliver what now appears to be an exposition of the United States Constitution, with interjected opinions as to why that country should “not waste her energies in European troubles.”

The soup comes in. The lecture grows; nine-tenths of it is directed straight past me to the women on my right, with, it appears to me, not a little of it meant for me. During this I learn,

from a word dropped now and then, that the chief target of the out-pouring is also from the States, and that the other is Italian. They all wear long, gold chains around their necks and big, gold brooches at their throats, and only about two rings apiece.

With the joint a man and a woman enter and sit at the table by the opening of the door. They are rather small, and have the courage and common-sense to dress as they like—so it seems. He is middle-aged; she is much younger, apparently. He is quiet; so is she, yet bright with it and rather dainty. I know at once that they are English and like them. Whether or not they are husband and wife I cannot tell.

The interchange of greetings amongst the five gives me a respite from the lecture; and I think I can say the same for the two on my right. But it soon starts afresh, and its vigour is enviable. Half of it is now directed at the late-comers (they are all boarders), and I am pleased—delighted to see that they don't accept the oracle's pronouncements at her valuation. He takes up the opposition, rather feebly; still it is opposition, and he is a quiet man. She resents much of what is thrown at her, but is, I surmise, playfully disdainful of it. Besides, she is essentially feminine,

and the lecturer is not; neither is the latter exactly a masculine woman. Give everything its due. Now and then it seems to me that she tries to give a softer tone to some of her numerous verdicts, and her frequent smile is rather a pleasant thing—something like this excellent war-bread, well-baked, light withal and slightly bitter.

Now I become convinced that some of the lecture is really directed at me. I thought before that certain opinions in it were, they seemed to hit me so emphatically on the left cheek as they went by; but I took it that this was possibly because my head is in the direct line of fire to the target on my right. At last I know, by the other four pairs of eyes being fixed on me when the opinions come along, that I am the object of the attack. Still I try to dodge the “our Wilson” this, “our Wilson” that, “our Wilson” the other, and the various ill-digested, cocksure *obiter dicta* that accompany the many “ours.”

But I am caught at last, by a flagrant ignoring of the fact that the United States is one of the signatory nations to the Independence of Belgium. In a foolish moment I correct this error,¹ and soon

¹ I regret sincerely that this statement was wrong. I was, and have been up to now, firmly convinced that America had

the battle is going merrily, and my opponent's courage, if not her methods, are worthy of a really good cause. Of course, it is rapier play on my part, and I strive to make it light, knowing all the time that the antagonist is one who would not appreciate any favours. No, she is one who prefers to take a "level chance." She harps repeatedly on "our Wilson's mighty queer row," and presently asks what he is to do with a hundred thousand German reservists at his back ready for civil war. I reply that practically none of those men are asking for passports, in order to return home and fight for Germany; and that such passports, via Holland and Scandinavia, can be had for the asking. She is inclined to doubt this; but I contrive to convince her, and she is rather subdued for a while.

That this is all pleasantly acceptable to the other four is soon very palpable; only I wish they would not support me. I want the enemy to myself. Besides, I love justice; and five to one are too many, even when four do no more than give assent here and there. A break comes by my asking the waiter if there are no sweets. "No,"

signed the 1870 Belgian Treaty of Independence. I therefore beg that, if this should come under the eyes of the lady who talked so well to me in that Sorrento hotel, she will forgive the over-sure mistake I made.

my compatriot informs me; "yesterday was a 'sweet day'; to-day is a 'fruit day.' You cannot have sweets and fruit on the same day, unless it is a meatless day. But you can have plenty of nuts." He speaks to the waiter, who goes out and brings me a small bowl of walnuts.

By this time the engagement has been resumed. It is carried on till I have cracked the last nut, but my opponent's vigour has waned perceptibly. When I ask if smoking is allowed, she rises, smiles down on me, and, with true American candour, asks who I am. "The purser of a British steamer, madam, whose captain kindly carries the purse and allows me to go on holiday, as you see," I reply. Then follow question and answer in rapid, smiling succession. "Oh, then you are not staying here?" "No, madam." "I'm sorry." "Thank you." "But I guess you're something else besides a ship's purser." "Am I?" "Yes. Now just where did you get all your information?" "By judicious reading and listening, the use of some deduction and an ever-greedy appetite for facts."

"Well, I figure it you're not a purser at all." "Thank you." "Tell us who you are. You're not just a purser. Sure?"

The hammer-taps of assurance have all gone now, and some feminine persuasion has taken

their place. Her compatriot is smiling at us, the Italian lady is not, but the English couple are. I answer:

“ But many pursers are educated, well-informed men—on British ships, at least.” “ But not on American? ” “ I have no experience.” “ But tell us who you are just. You’ve got some stunt on, I believe.” “ Well, say I am one who scribbles a bit in his leisure, has a great admiration for beautiful things and literary talent, and came up to see this place and Crawford’s—— ” “ Oh, *our* Crawford! ” “ No, madam, Sorrento’s and the English-speaking world’s.” “ Oh, I give you up. But I just wish you were staying right here.”

I thank her again as she turns and sails from the small room, followed at once by her two companions. The English lady bows, smiles rewardingly and goes after them. He comes over, shakes hands and departs also. And still I am puzzled to know whether they are brother and sister or husband and wife. I settle my reckoning—three francs, with the franc at thirty-seven and a half to the £1!—and one for wine, and I, too, go forth, refreshed physically and mentally.

After a tour of the place generally I am back in the Piazza Tasso and proceed to buy a few

mementoes for friends—a little bas-relief of Petrarch, another of Dante, a small, finely-inlaid olive-wood box, a large, long-buried Neapolitan dagger that has most likely drawn blood many a time and probably sent one or two to their last account; and a lovely little, old, bronze statue of Diana, a draped, and what appears to me to be a perfectly-modelled Greek figure. I have given twenty francs for her; as a “thing of beauty” she is worth a hundred, and a thousand more as a soul-warmer—I mean the idea and all for which the figure stands. Every bust and bas-relief of Tasso is too much for my purse, so I am disappointed in this matter, and for a while I resent Tyche’s spiteful restrictions of my humble desires.

In pre-war days these things would have cost three times what I have paid for them. But sellers of such things are now glad to get almost any price for their wares. Before the war they drove a thriving trade amongst the tourists, for whom alone they catered, and of whom they have seen nothing these two years and a half. Like every other belligerent country the cost of living has gone up here in proportion to the decrease in money-value and commerce. Yet I cannot find any trace of general depression or grumbling.

Neither does there seem to be any shortage of able young men. Captain Dash tells me that in Torre Annunziata and all around the bay to Naples it is the same, as it is in Castellamare and along the ten miles from there to here. So that if these thirty miles or so be a fair sample of the country generally, one is glad to know that Italy still has a good reserve of man-power.

By the time I board the car for Castellamare evening is closing in, and the square is almost deserted. On the way back I catch glimpses presently of Vesuvius belching ruddy smoke into the clear, rather chilly, star-lit night, and I fall to studying my travelling companions, a favourite pastime with every psychologist.

Here at my side is one who has probably been a dilatory man all his life. He is not a dreamer. His forehead is narrow, smooth and of no attraction. A man of about forty-five, thin, with a three days' stubble around a weak mouth. The gaze of his ordinary eyes moves slowly over the news in yesterday's paper; and when he opens and refolds it, I am inclined to think he will never complete the operation. Presently he asks the passing conductor a question, receives an answer, and settles himself back to the stale news, with neither disappointment, annoyance nor resigna-

tion on his face. (As yet there are no conductresses on any of the cars around the bay.)

Being interested, I inquire of the conductor the purport of the question. The latter has been an ice-cream vendor in London, speaks some English, is a wounded soldier from the Isonzo, and he tells me the man has passed his stopping-place, but will go on to the next one, pay ten centimes extra, and another to come back. From his appearance I should say that the fifth of a franc would be a consideration to him. Thus I look on him as one who has always put off till the morrow anything he could.

Now I seem to see him in another scene. It is Judgment Day. The trumpet sounds. He turns over, murmurs a sleepy grumble against the summons, and settles himself for a final, short nap. By-and-bye he stirs again, not lazily altogether, but in a sort of come-day go-day manner. All is weirdly still. He arises leisurely and saunters to the Pearly Gates. They are closed. St. Peter is gone, and the dilatory man sits down to think of the situation.

When we started we had a good sprinkling of military men (they are nearly all officers out this way, of one grade or another), stiff, silent, precise men who rarely look to the right or left,

and never smile except when spoken to by a woman. I make no attempt to get at their psychology; it is buckramed under by discipline and uniform. Now the civilians have left us and the military have increased till it almost looks as if the car has been commandeered. Thus my studies are limited. Most of the other civilian faces that I can see are soon passed over, and I settle on a flirting couple at the fore-end of the car. He is a youngish Dutch commercial traveller, who has been in conversation with me, his eyes on the woman whilst he talked. He went "to ask her a question about Sorrento," and was in immediate, animated conversation with her. She may be twenty-five or so; but, as is usual in Italy, she looks to be thirty. That she is enjoying the talk her eyes and face are eloquent.

When I enter the cabin I find our master reading a London newspaper, one of several he has brought back from Naples. (He is always thoughtful and liberal in this way.) He lowers the sheet and asks where I have been, affecting surprise at my return. "I was going to the police about you in the morning, you know. Because I quite expected the brigands had got you." I begin to tell him of Sorrento and its beauties. Every now and then he interrupts with the

questions: "But didn't you go up the mountains?" and "How did you escape the brigands?" Ignoring these I display my purchases. The bas-reliefs are of no interest to him; but the dagger is, and, with that enviable talent of his at improvising a story, he at once spins one of blood and passion concerning the thing. When I get his attention to the statuette, he looks it up and down then says: "M'm, it's a piece of metal to me—a fine one p'r'aps. But where's the lady?"

Saturday-night: Under the kindly guidance of our consul (not a Britisher, but a very pleasant and an apparently clever fellow, whom every one seems to know, and against whose hand no door appears to be closed) I have pretty well scoured Castellamare's hill-side slums and better ways. (About half the town is built on the steep slope of a foot-hill or two to the mountains in the immediate background. This narrowness opens out as the town extends towards Pompeii, as it does on the other side in the direction of Sorrento. Just west of the small dockyard, at the head of the harbour, the space between the bay and the mountain-side is sufficient only for the tramway, the road and the rampart-wall.) He has also taken me up the mountain roads some distance, so that I could look back on the town (steps for

giants the roofs seemed to be in some parts), the bay and around it generally.

During all this I have met several men of affairs and have learnt more as to how the people are taking the war—or rather, it has been proved to me that what I had already gathered was the general truth. The walls and hoardings of the place are placarded with yellow bills and others in the national colours urging the people to invest in the nation's war funds, for which the different banks are offering four-and-a-half and five per cent., according to the duration of the loan. Some say that this appeal is being well-responded to; others shake their heads dubiously, and say: "Yes, in the industrial towns and the north; but over this side and in the south——" Then come the shake, the look of doubt, regret and an expressive silence.

That which I shall most remember, however, are the mean streets, with their shops, "cake houses" and cabarets. Take one place as typical of its sort: Forenoon it is. Dirty buff-coloured tenements rear up within about twenty-five feet of each other. The street is stone-paved, garbage-strewn, gloomy, and wet with soap-suds, etc., thrown from the doorways. We pass under a lintel, against a supporting-post of which stands

a sack of some kind of meal. At the receipt of custom behind a small counter on my left stands a wrinkled, old dame, whose hair is still black, but her face has nothing of the usual saffron tinge. Further into the semi-darkness I discern another squat figure, this time in a white cap and jacket. The consul draws me along to him. He is the baker of this "cake house."

Whilst the different cakes are being explained to me, an order comes from somewhere behind us. The baker at once cuts off a piece of ready-made dough, rolls it out, thin and round, marks it into sections—not severs them—puts a dried fruit in each part, places the thing on his oven-slice—and, lo! there is the oven in the corner, now disclosed by the opening of the door. In goes the dainty, for I am given to understand that spices, or something of that nature, have been kneaded into the dough. But instead of closing his oven-door the baker throws in a double-handful of chips. These flame up on one side of the capacious place, whilst the cake is brought near them and is kept moving there till cooked. This happens in two or three minutes; then out comes the dainty, not risen at all, and is handed across the eight feet or so of open shop and into a large, low-roofed recess, with an archway entrance and no

door, wherein I now see a couple of soldiers and two or three young civilians playing some game of chance, eating the cake, steaming hot, in between puffs from their cigarettes, and drinking wine by the light of a candle that, to us on the outside, just serves to show up their faces and the things on the table exactly after the manner of an old Dutch interior canvas. More orders come in, for cakes of other sorts (The baker makes about half-a-dozen from the same heap of dough, the differences being gained by the varieties of fruit used). My cicerone points out two further recesses, in all particulars like the nearer one. Then he tenders our thanks. We pass the four or five women and girls at the counter, gain the narrow street, and I gasp for air.

The evenings of the two past days have been spent at work, because of my having the cabin to myself. (I started to write a book when coming back across the Atlantic.) This afternoon I piloted the third officer, an apprentice and the chief of the gunners to Sorrento. I was determined that some one in this crew besides me should taste its glories, and it was better to take the young than the seasoned and *blasé*. Now—although I don't like parties on such expeditions, because I prefer to be alone then—I have agreed

to be one of a half-score whom the chief officer has been getting together during the past week for a trip to Pompeii to-morrow.

Sunday-forenoon: The muster begins; but it is a very laggard one. The third officer drops out by going to Naples with his father. (He has been to the ruins on a former voyage; yet this is no justification for backing out now.) An engineer follows suit, and there is a rumour of another doing the same. The mate decides that he cannot go because the cargo-men are at work to-day; and the offer of the second mate (who has a master's certificate, therefore knows the alphabet of the matter) to take his place is declined. Thus goes our organiser. The excursion looks like falling to pieces; but even if it does there are the carriages and the luncheon to pay for.

The programme (made with a cross-eyed young shoreman, who has some undefinable connection with the working of the cargo) is that this shoreman shall provide two carriages, lunch, entrance to the ruins and guide at a fixed sum per head of the original ten. I wanted us to walk to the station here, less than a mile away, take train to Pompeii station (about three miles), pay our own entrance fees, etc., and have lunch at one of the restaurants on coming out. But it runs in the blood of the

sea-going man that he cannot have a jaunt of this sort without a "carriage." To have any real enjoyment on such an occasion he must sit behind something that pulls him along and has a tail to swish about. So there the vehicles are, drawn up on the quay, with a crowd of slatterns, idlers and dirty children about them; and there six of us land eventually, are gaped at by the nondescript, whilst a "barney" occurs between us and the caterer over the decrease in our numbers, till at last away we go, with friction amongst us at the outset.

I will pass over the hour-and-a-half of hurried, blurred, chatter-by-rote visit to some parts of the excavated city. I always detested such excursions; and our guide on this occasion had such a pretence to knowledge that I felt constrained to pull him up twice—once in the Temple of Isis, when he went off his verbal beat to talk utter nonsense, two or three minutes of insufferable vanity before rushing us off to another spot; and in the Temple of Apollo, where he told us that Apollo was the Greek god of love, etc., because, forsooth, this temple was set aside for worship of the tender passion. Of course, he saw that some of us were sailor-men; and I suppose, he took us all to be as salty and barnacled as the popular

idea still persists in making those who do their business on the great waters.

Whilst we were roaming about the dead streets, etc., we met a party of our deck-hands and stokers, made up for the most part of the Scandinavian and black elements; but the Prince was not with them. I believe it has been noticed that he always makes his shore-journeys alone.

Now we are outside, by the carriages, on a sort of embankment-road about a hundred yards long, and extending from the highway to a sort of loop off-shoot to this Marine Gate of the ruins—which is said to have been on the fore-shore when the place was buried. But the main point is that we are, in sailor-phrase, just clear of the starboard side of a hotel-restaurant, on the blind side of another, and in full view of some of the windows of a smaller caravanserie a little way along the loop-road. We were told that our *al fresco* lunch would be taken in privacy, on a grassy bank and under trees. There is not a blade of grass in sight, nor a tree within half a mile. Rain has fallen pretty heavily in the night; deep puddles are about, and we have nothing to sit on.

Here our luncheon is dragged out and dumped on the roadside. The basket is big enough; but, then, it holds meals for ten men—thirteen, I

suppose, as the caterer and the charioteers must eat likewise. The lid is thrown up, and each one of us is handed a half-rye loaf about the size of three rolls. Some of us look questioningly at these; others are saying that they don't want so much bread, when The Chief finds that his has been cut in halves, scooped out somewhat and the hollow filled with a garlic. Instantly we others make the same discovery with our loaves.

Now this, with a small piece of salt fish sometimes, forms the dinner of each man who is working out our cargo, also of any other meal he may have at work. We ask the meaning of it; the caterer tells us it is a sort of preliminary to the lunch—*hors d'œuvres* in fact. Collectively and separately we think it is a joke on the part of the mate. Whilst we stand thus, looking at one another and wondering, with the garlicks all exposed, like green, hard yolks of half-eggs, along the edge of the road—not more than twenty feet wide—along come our seamen and firemen, on their way from the ruins to the main road. They look, but continue on in silence; and we know that looks can speak both humour and contempt.

A parley ensues between the caterer and us. The Chief and I cut this short by returning our loaves to the basket, and saying that we are going

to lunch in one of the restaurants. At once we are followed by the other four. In a body we turn into the place, under whose quarter we have had our humiliation, are shown straight into "ze bes' room," and find our forecastle party at the central table, with the black and the German-looking Russian filling glasses from bottles of the best wine ¹ in the neighbourhood.

Without a perceptible pause we pass on to "ze secon' bes' room," and thoroughly enjoy the joke, when our laughter cannot be heard at that central table. Whilst we are making a pleasure of the luncheon, in comes our caterer, disappointment, injury, and surprise on his face. He wants to know if he cannot eat with us; he was to have shared the *al fresco* meal with us, and the cost of his bread, garlic, wine and meat (oh, he had meat there!) was all in the so-many-francs per head of us: So why can't he share in this?—at our expense. When we all understand his meaning he makes a quick dash for the door, leaving a sinister look behind from that left cross-eye of his, and having, I fear, some marks of greasy bones, etc., about his head, face and shoulders.

¹ In English "tears of Christ from Vesuvius." The wine is a sort of champagne, and it is only on the slopes of the mountain that the grapes will grow from which it is made.

Yet Captain Dash will have it that practically all Southern Italians are *wily* "bummers."

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The cargo is out. The *Tramp* is being prepared for sea again, and this brings the mate once more butt against a piece of sheer official stupidity and, what is worse at the present time, unpardonable waste. Because of red-tape and a blunder or two in London we had to leave that port with some thirty-odd sacks of "sweepings" aboard—*i.e.*, wheat swept up in the holds and more or less fit for use when cleaned. The worst of it would have made good fowl food. But officialism said it could not be put ashore. This was repeated in Bermuda, Philadelphia and Gibraltar. Now the same thing is occurring here. Because these thirty-odd sacks of food-stuff are not part of the cargo, we must take them to sea again, finally heave it overboard! Meanwhile, there are bread restrictions in every belligerent country!

CHAPTER XIII

Instances of kindness—Odds and ends—U-boats at work—Escorts that don't guard—A foolish practice—Algiers "the white"—Trouble at the quay—The density of officialism—An order and a refusal—Arrested—More intelligence—A bright, informing luncheon-party—Catching U-boats—Matters in Algiers—A rumour—Touring the town—The mingling of white and brown—Soldiers' pastimes—The value of an "Autorisation."

ANOTHER Sunday: Night it is, and we are creeping along lightless, all port-lights blocked, in fine weather, forty miles or so out from Castellamare, and no longer s.s. *Tramp*, but H.M. Transport No. —.

During the past week the consul took me over a large macaroni factory, combined with some grinding mills. We spent nearly three hours there, went to luncheon, and returned to finish the survey. I am further indebted to him for taking me to a factory for the extraction of oil from the shells of olive-kernels, which were previously used merely as fuel; also to some springs of iron, sulphur and magnesia waters, some of which belong to the town and are turned to public service. Alone or in company I made

more trips up the mountain-slopes, and have now done a creditable week's work in the cabin here.

Another matter of interest is that the master had an attack of influenza early in the week. One result of this was a great surprise to me, in that he took my advice to remain in bed a couple of days, during which I physicked him from my private medicine-chest, and the steward did all he could with tempting dishes. Whether it was that my style of doctoring *drove* him out again so soon, or Nature and it combined to bring him out properly, I don't know; but on the third day he was about and fairly well.

After trying repeatedly and all in vain to get my photographs back by way of the ship-chandler's runner, the man himself came aboard an hour or so before we sailed to-day. He was full of apologies, suave excuses, promises, and all sorts of things except my films. What I threatened him with I hardly know, possibly the full weight of British administrative displeasure; and Captain Dash also lent me a few broadsides from his heavy guns. If apparent contrition was any recompense for my loss, I was well-repaid. But what stuck most in my mind was that all my attempts at a photographic record of the voyage

seemed to be pre-doomed. However, Mr. George Stanford¹ (son of our agent at Naples) was present, and he was good enough to say that he would take the matter up for me. So all I can do now is to "bide a wee," be hopeful, and take more snapshots when I can.

This is only the second ship-chandler with whom I have come into contact this voyage, and I shall not forget either of them for some time to come. Still, on second thoughts, is he to blame? Or is it the "vengeance" of his runner, for the little lecture I gave him about patriotism and manliness on the day when he went with me for my permit? I cannot be sure which is the true case; but the latter is very likely.

Another thing not to be forgotten: Whilst we lay at Castellamare our master several times expressed the intention of getting "a cat to keep the rats down, but a black one—oh, it must be a black 'un!" At this he laughed; at the first repetition, however, I considered the laugh to be rather empty, and jocularly suggested that he wanted the cat for a mascot; which he, being

¹ Five months later Mr. Stanford succeeded in unearthing the bulk of my photographs—a remarkable piece of work in Italy at such a time. But, alas, they are not deemed worthy of illustrating this book. Thus ended my attempt in that direction.

Captain Dash, would not have. All the same, I believe there to be in him a strain of superstition, of which he is well-aware yet will not confess. At any-rate, whilst the unmooring was being done, a man came aboard and turned a couple of poor-looking, lean and frightened young cats out of a sack, in the cabin here. He had brought them from Naples, on order, and received ten francs for his trouble. One was black with a white chest; but the other had as much white as black in its coat. Immediately they were free they ran for hiding-places, and have not since been seen. It is no business of mine, therefore I say nothing about it; but I cannot understand the mind that brings a frightened animal into strange quarters, then leaves it to hide away till down-right hunger forces it out again.

However, having put a saucer of condensed milk under the bath—where one of them appears to have stowed itself away—here goes for my bunk, with everything handy for a sudden call. We are heading for a bad part of these U-boat hunting-grounds; but sleep must be had, U-boats or none. Besides, it is good philosophy to carry on as usual wherever practical; it is a fine antidote for “nerves.”

Monday-evening: We are still afloat. Most of

the day has been spent at my work, and in darning socks when thought flagged. I have long found some such easy occupation conducive to the easy flow of words and ideas, especially when sitting at the desk from twelve to fourteen hours a day. Captain Dash says I have no need ever to be held up in my work during this voyage, seeing that he has "a double-arm of socks with holes in."

We are now West of Cape Vito, Sicily, and making for Cape Bon—a sort of blind mole going instinctively for a certain point. With a maximum speed of eight-and-a-half knots per hour, and no wireless to learn what is going on beyond the horizon, how could it be but that such poor scallywags of the world's highways should continually be victims to fast submarines? Every vessel of a thousand tons and upwards that comes out of sight of land should be compelled to have a wireless installation—nay, her tonnage does not matter. The governing point should be that she leaves the coast. To be out here at a time like this is to know the necessities of the case.

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Africa is in sight again, to me almost as forbidding as ever. Although the weather is fine, a pall of cloud hangs over the land.

When we were approaching Cape Bon at day-

break a patrol-vessel came snorting away out to us, all haste and foam. A U-boat was at work inside — or had been yester-evening — catching steamers as they made the Cape, there to re-shape their courses. Whilst he lay off, giving us directions where and how to proceed, we could hear the booming of guns beyond the horizon. So when we turned our head and steamed away again, a double look-out was set, the gun was loaded and the gunners stood by their piece.

Now, late afternoon, we are steaming along within a mile and a half of the land, ready to shoot, run ashore, or do both, according to how circumstances may shape, if a periscope pops up suddenly in our vicinity. And all the time, night and day, the master walks that upper bridge, or sits for change on a camp-stool, and comes down only for his meals, and a fresh supply of tobacco or matches now and then. It is more than any man should be expected to do.

To-day, some extra-valuable steamer has gone by, eastwards, with two escorts and going at twelve to fourteen knots. A low, grey, Governmental thing was leading, her head half-buried in the foam she made, *nearly two miles away from her convoy*; whilst the rear escorting craft — more of the fisher-patrol type — was not less

than *a mile and a half astern*. In Gibraltar we heard of merchantmen being torpedoed in spite of their guard-vessels, and consequently thought that it was a poor look-out for such as the *Tramp*. But if all escorts keep so far from their convoys as those two to-day were doing, the only reason why their convoys are not sunk under their noses is because a U-boat does not chance to come up within sight of each one of them.

Next day: We have passed signs of more foul submarine work—large patches of oil on the surface of the water for a distance of some three miles; then a British steamer ashore, with two tug-boats boxing about her and a patrol-boat doing duty in the offing. Same as yesterday, vessels are coming and going, east and west, all the time, there never being less than a couple in sight at once. Two more escorted steamers have also gone by. In one case the escorts were pretty handy to their convoy; in the other they were as far off as the two were yesterday. As seafaring men we have discussed this, and we are completely unable to see why the protecting craft should so materially reduce their powers of protection. It is as though a man with a stick set a youth without one to walk along the edge of tall grass with snakes in it, then drew off forty

or fifty yards and said: "Push on; I'll look after you."

Since the second day out I have taken to placing food near where the cats are hiding under No. 2 winch. Nothing will entice them out as yet, they are so frightened; but whenever a meal-time comes along they call out in abominably piercing tones. I never heard a British cat with such a pitiful, high-pitched, penetrating wail. Captain Dash sneers at them when they squall, and scornfully says they are "Italian bummers."

Night, ten-thirty: We are off Algiers, where bunker-coal is to be put aboard for a South American trip; but there is no chance of our getting in to-night, and so having rest of mind and body. On the contrary, we must box about out here till sun-rise—half-speed, turn about and dodge, a most easy prey to any U-boat that may happen along. And who can say that one won't come? It is the same now at all these Allied Mediterranean ports—no entering allowed between sun-set and sun-rise—and the wonder to us is that an enemy submarine doesn't come along at such a time and play bobs-a-dinah with the waiting vessels.

We know, of course, that where patrol-boats

are doing sentry-go (as they are now doing between here and Cape Bon) this merchant-craft hunting by U-boats is much the same as an owl looking for food in daylight. He must sleep most of the time; and if no mouse, vole, or anything of the sort, be within sight just as he opens his eyes and closes them again, then he must continue to go hungry. All the same, however, we as seafarers, know that if we were on the same piratical work as the Germans are we should make a very satisfactory haul now and then in a bay like this. Thus it is that we cannot understand why Mr. Gentlehun doesn't do the same thing. Lack of knowledge of these times and places does not prevent him from coming; because, according to common hearsay, his spies are still pretty numerous up and down the Mediterranean. And, of course, he knows these bays as well as we do. However, here we are; and here we must take our chance till the sun comes to relieve us. So I turn in, after physicking myself for the influenza that I appear to have caught from Captain Dash.

* * * * *

Yesterday we took in two great lighters of coal. Meanwhile I sat here, nursing my cold, writing, and trying to keep out the infernally insidious dust of this Welsh coal. After being up more or

less for three days and nights the Old Man was ashore all day, attending to the ship's needs. Now, our last day here, I have so far got the better of this influenza that I, too, am going ashore. Algiers is *terra incognita* to me, and I cannot possibly have an opportunity of seeing it and go away without doing so; that were unimaginable.

Yet I am a little doubtful about my permit. Yesterday Captain Dash said he would see about it and have it sent aboard, as the authorities were so particular that no one should land without one. But I suppose he was too busy to attend to a small matter that lay outside his usual procedure. It did not come. However, a youth from the Custom House has just been aboard, and has told me that my permit is lying at the agent's office (He points it out on the boulevard above the quay.), where I can have it for the asking. As for getting there: All I have to do at the quay is to repeat what he has told me. So, remembering the ease of going ashore and aboard in Oran, I put some quinine tablets into my pocket, take a light overcoat and hail a boat. On our way across the harbour I am asked if I have a permit. I explain the matter, and am presently transferred to another boat.

When I step on to the quay (a sunken embrasure, with four or five steps right and left up to

the quay proper) a gendarme comes forward, with his hand out and a revolver in the holster at his belt. I go up the steps on my left, explaining the situation as I draw nearer to the man. He lets me talk a while, having at the outset kept my boatman at the steps by an up-curling motion of the index-finger of his left hand, his right one being on the holster. Then he holds out his palm again, saying machine-like: "*Autorisation, autorisation.*" Again I explain and point to the agent's office in the Boulevard de la Republique, a stone's throw above us and in full view. He doesn't even deign to look up there. His only word is "*Autorisation,*" now in a tone that is becoming querulous. "*Parley Anglais ?*" I ask, and get no recognition.

He is a smallish, middle-aged man, rather round-shouldered, with grey, slow-moving eyes, a dark-red, weather-beaten face, a thin nose, a two days' growth on his purple cheeks and chin, and a uniform out of which the blue is all gone and the next colour will be a vague, dull green.

Presently he turns slightly from me to the boatman, on whom his attention has been fixed all the time; and if ever a traveller was damned in his Charon I am in mine. In my time I have seen some hundreds of his fraternity, and marked

a score or two; but for dirt and the repulsiveness that comes of it—the man is not ugly—I don't remember to have seen his equal. He, too, is middle-aged, but big, and has short, black hair over two-thirds of his face. I cannot ascertain the tint and texture of his skin. His clothing is ragged and filthy. His hands, like his nose and face, are long and don't seem to have been washed this year.

The gendarme questions him sharply as to where he picked me up. The reply seems to arouse suspicion. Now I am asked where I come from. I understand the motions more than the words, answer with the vessel's name, offer my papers (Registration Card, Castellamare permit, etc.), point once more to the agent's office, and rattle away again with details of the situation. By this time a small crowd of French, Moors, half-castes and blacks, men and youths, have gathered near. There is no female anywhere amongst them. The gendarme pays no heed to me, not a scrap. A shabby uniform and an unclean chin make no difference to his sword-edge sense of duty. In a sharp, but moderate, voice he is all the time soundly rating the boatman and demanding to see *his* papers. These are produced, dirty and frayed. With evident and serious scorn the officer

goes through them, then hands all back except one, which he keeps. This is the cause of much talk from Charon. But the man at my side pays him no heed. Two or three of the Frenchmen in the crowd make unheeded suggestions. Not one of the coloured men says a word.

Turning my way again the gendarme orders me aboard. I refuse to go, and again launch into the hopelessness of displaying my papers, pointing to the agent's office, saying the permit is lying there, and finally make a demand to be taken to an officer who can speak English. Before I am through a third of my minute-long expostulation he has turned his head half-away and seems to be contemplating an object in the air along the quay. Presently he says something more to the boatman, then beckons another gendarme, from their box-like office, and between the two I am marched away, with the crowd at our heels, and my captors' hands significantly on the butts of their revolvers.

In a short time we come to a small building over the door of which I read "Police du Port," and think: "Oh, I shall get a superior officer here, at any-rate, if nothing else." My surmise proves to be correct. My papers are examined at once; my story is listened to; the gendarme who would

not heed a word of it is sent back to his post, and the other to the agent's office. The latter does not bring back the permit, as I expected he would, but the "water" clerk, who was aboard yesterday, saw me and now vouches for my being "the ship's purser." Thus I am released, with smiles and apologies from M. le Commissaire; but not with a permit. I now learn that the document has never been issued; that it will be sent up to the agent's office, and that I must call there for it this afternoon in order to be able to go aboard again. In the meantime I am free to go where I will.

I go back with the "water" clerk, to get some French money. Whilst I am there in comes our master and another, both of whom are amused greatly at my "adventure." I receive a smack on the back that nearly floors me, am told that I shall "get done in yet," if I "only keep pegging," and am invited to luncheon. The latter comes about after a stroll through some of the fine streets and the Square Bresson. As seen from the harbour and this stroll Algiers is indeed "the white" and, as city thoroughfares go, the splendid. With its semicircle of green, that rises slightly above it, and its front of marine-blue it is a most enviable possession.

At the table there are five British merchant captains, one of whom has had his vessels torpedoed twice and mined once, yet is still cheerfully determined to carry on. Here Captain Dash informs me that the steamer we saw ashore yesterday was run in there to escape a U-boat. He then tells the other members of the party about my morning's mishap, enlarges on it and its possibilities, according to his habit, says he fears I shall "get laid by the heels somewhere before we arrive home," and dubs me "the suspected spy." He will have it that my glasses and general appearance are those of a German professor. All this arouses merriment and forthwith I am "Spy."

Presently one of the company tells a story of a R.N.R. lieutenant who had charge of a trawler-patrol. The latter knew the weakness of German submarine crews for fresh fish. So he dismounted and stowed away his gun and wireless apparatus, improvised some fishing gear, made a couple of good hauls, and was lucky enough to fall in with a U-boat whilst the second haul was lying fresh on deck. After some preliminaries and a visit paid by his second-in-charge, the enemy commander laid his vessel alongside the British—the sea being smooth—for the easier and

quicker transfer of the fish. Here some fraternising took place. Then, at the hoped-for, opportune moment, some of the U-boat's men were shut down in the patrol-boat; and her crew snatched revolvers and cutlasses from secret places, leapt aboard the submarine, and had possession of her in a few minutes. The lieutenant then stowed his prisoners safely, found the U-boat's papers, wireless code, etc., took her gun, sank her; remounted his gun, the new one and his wireless apparatus, sent out a message from the instruction-book, and waited. The result was a bag of three more German pirate craft, which he was able to send to the bottom before they could make any effective reply.

From a third skipper we hear of a navy-patrol vessel—not a former fishing craft—that fell in one fine morning with a Dutch trawler far from home-waters. The British commander was not satisfied with Mynheer's representations. So he had the packet searched, discovered a large stock of petrol in tin cans under the flooring of her hold and cabin, put a prize crew aboard, mounted a gun from his own vessel, then sent the latter away beyond the horizon for the time being. He had not waited more than a couple of hours when a periscope popped up within half-a-mile and was promptly

sent back. Before sun-down a second U-boat had been served in the same way, and another was got on the following morning, thus proving that the Hollander was their supply vessel.

For a little while after this the talk is on the set manner of the French people here. They seem to have little or no gaiety, neither are they in any-wise depressed. They are like ordinary, serious persons at business, quietly confident of success. The officers (of whom many are sent here, because of the climate, and after partially recovering from wounds, etc.) are much the same in bearing as those were that I saw in Italy. But for the numerous uniforms and the little, upright, gold stripes on the sleeves, I should think that Algiers is much the same now as it was before the war.

The war-bread is excellent, as French bread always is; it is nearly white, and therefore has no taste of rye, which is probably due to the amount of corn grown in the country. (In passing, I hear that after the war it is the intention of the authorities to irrigate the great tract of hinterland, and thus make it a rich corn-producing country that will supply France with all she does not grow at home. But, then, this may be a brother-story to the old one of turning the Sahara into an

inland sea by means of a canal out of the Mediterranean here.)

Same as in France and Italy there is a meatless day a week in the province—this is it; so we are lunching from some excellent fish, the rather unusual taste of which (not unlike the taste of our North Sea thornback) has set two of the company against it. However, there are cheese, sweets and plenty of fruit.

After the meal I secure my "*Autorisation*," then start off to find things out for myself as usual. Of the mosques—Djemaa-Djedid, La Grande and Sidi Abderhaman—I say nothing, having seen much better; but of such thoroughfares as Rue Bab-Azoun, Rue Michelet (named after the writer, I am vain enough to think), Rue d'Isly and the Boulevard de la Republique, with its *rampes* down to the quay (not the least like the *rampes* of Gibraltar), also of the very fine buildings here and there and the general excellence of the whole, I could say much. As for the Moorish quarter and such peeps at the native as one gets in alleys like Rue Kléber—they are as good as anything I saw in the old times, and I don't wonder that so many Eastern Americans find them irresistible.

But that which surprises me most and gives

considerable pleasure withal is the democratic mingling of the races. This afternoon in such shopping centres as the Rue d'Isly and the streets around Place Bresson it was instructive, indeed, to see how white and brown, veiled and unveiled, stately figures in flowing robes, chic hats on dainty heads and short frocks on sprightly forms, all came and went, easily, freely shouldering their separate ways amongst each other, as though all were of one race and religion. The same in places of entertainment: The tall, handsome, dignified—young or old—Moor sits side-by-side with a white matron or *grisette*, watching the play, or listening to "Variety turns"; as does his yashmaked compatriot (but always accompanied by her kind) with Giaours here and there about the place. One wonders what Byron would think of the scene, and how he would swear it "demned good," or the reverse, if he could see it. Truly, I believe it would be a draw between the French and ourselves as to which nation is the best coloniser of modern times. The scene also sets me seeing what the Germans would have done with these quiet-looking, fiery-hearted brown folk.

One two-fold point that rather puzzles me is the fact that there are but few blacks about, and

those whom I see appear rather to hold apart from all others. Yet the puzzle is in the facts that the French have not our prejudice to the negro, and that the Mahometan creed makes all colours equal, so be that the owners of them are of the Faithful; and I am not aware of there being any other religion amongst the coloured peoples along this coast.

Down by the opera house I buy a small painting of the town from the entrance to the harbour, from the hand of an invalided soldier, I am told; also a grotesque carving of Burglar Wilhelm, in his "Death's Head" shakoo, done by an Algerine whilst on the Verdun front and brought home by him. At first Captain Dash can see no likeness in this to the Crown Prince—neither could I for some time—then he says that if U-boat or a raider catches us "we shall every man Jack of us be shot out of hand." My reply is that the fact of having it aboard will be a mascot against all the enemy.

When I go aboard I make purposely for the same quay-steps. My antagonist of the *Autorisation* is not here. Another gendarme is on duty in his place, one who knows me not, yet lets me pass unchallenged into the boat, although the permit says that he should take it from me. I begin to

think that if I had been blessed with a more favourable Charon, and had not run into the arms of such a piece of official machinery as the first gendarme, I should have found it as easy to come ashore as I am finding it is to go aboard. Another thing, in the *Tramp's* saloon I learn right away that half of the men were ashore last night, and returned more or less drunk, without permits or challenge; also that one of them was locked up, paid fifteen francs to buy himself out, was escorted to the quay and seen off, *sans* any one knowing that he had no *Autorisation*!

Well, so much for Algiers. And now looking back over the voyage so far I see: Bermuda—isle of blessedness; Philadelphia—blatant, ugly, money-grubbing, yet really fine in places; Gibraltar—grandeur, bitter weather and war-restrictions; Oran—picturesqueness, clean streets and climatic eccentricities; Castellamare—squalor backed by grandeur; Pompeii—city of the dead; Sorrento—cleanliness, comfort, quietude, old and new in lovely combination; Algiers—the beautiful; a really fine municipal jewel, with dark patches of the picturesque and romantic between it and its setting of green and blue.

CHAPTER XIV

A cause for alarm—My edition of the master's influenza—Gibraltar again—Terrific weather and more needless delay—A medicine-man's advice—An incident—What a fleet!—Taciturnity—Arguments and a better understanding—Improved health—Still creeping south.

I HAVE said that things are taken quietly here, in the matter of U-boats, as they are under the Red Ensign generally, and here is a scrap of material evidence. We were coming along the Spanish coast, knowing that the cowardly enemy was lurking about. (I think every action is cowardly if an unfair advantage is taken, big or little.) It was forenoon. The mate and the third officer were in charge, on the bridge; the Old Man had come down for something; when abruptly, almost alongside and forward withal, up popped about three feet of a vessel's derrick, perpendicular (it was doubtlessly fast to some submerged wreckage that kept it so), and having on the end a piece of wood that made it alarmingly like a periscope. In the flush of the moment it was taken for one, and a quick, quiet order was given to the helmsman, but countermanded at once.

The true nature of the thing was recognised in time for the vessel to be kept on her course. In addition to the two officers it was seen by five others of the crew, yet it caused no sort of alarm.

In spite of all I have been able to do to the contrary, this second edition of Captain Dash's influenza has got me thoroughly in its fell grip. (I never did like second editions, only first and specials.) It has also given me what I have never had till now, a bad, racking, insistent cough; just as he had it. In fact, the new edition is no more than a fresh "impression," a reprint, heavier than the first one. But I must be my own doctor and nurse; there is no one else to act for me. And as my bunk is close to the upper deck, the fumes of the lamps are so thick up there, making me cough violently throughout the night that I am compelled to get what sleep I can on the wood-like settee in the cabin. The master looks at me, laughs and says in Cockney twang, "Well, wot's the good of anyfing? W'y, nufing."

As he had several times admitted, he is a "poor patient" himself; and bad patients are notoriously ill sympathisers. He comes and goes, asks no questions of any sort, and says remarkably little on any subject; but, then, I am in no condition for much talk. Besides, when I get the

better of this I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I need not thank any one for my recovery.

We are in Gibraltar bay again, between our former anchorage and Algeciras and pretty close in to a weather-shore. Whilst we were waiting for examination this forenoon (the general two-thirds of a day's wait, with the prospect of being passed by till next day) a gale of wind got up. Our master stood this as long as he could, boxing about amongst the usual crowd of tramps, and having to handle a vessel that is very awkward when flying light in a strong breeze. Then he took the bull by its horns and steamed up here, leaving the examination lieutenant to come and stop us, if he wished to, which would compel him to put his formula, and thus set us free for whatever it is that we have to do. (We have come from Algiers knowing no more than that we should probably call at Europa Point, get instructions where to proceed to, and go.) But no one came after us. So here we are, with two anchors down, and steam up in readiness for what may happen in this terrific weather.

My cough has lessened considerably; but something is pretty wrong somewhere; and, like

five or six of the crew proper, including The Chief, I shall be glad to see a doctor. Yet how fortunate we have been in going to Italy, and getting back here with nothing worse than two cases of influenza, one of tonsilitis, and some stomach troubles! Other poor beggars have been caught on the way not many miles from us, and sent to the bottom, some of each crew going down also, a hundred to one. Well, it's all luck. And still there are persons ashore (I never heard of one of that ilk being at sea, except as a passenger) who persist in believing that there is no such thing as luck; that everything—every action and its outcome, are the results of direct human intelligence, or of its converse. Of course, there's the school of fatalists who try to make us puppets by eliminating both chance, and the free-will that we call intelligence. But if they only came to sea long enough, they would all change their opinions.

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At last the weather has moderated enough to allow a doctor to come off to us. He has given The Chief a pick-me-up, and told him he will "snip" his tonsils out to-morrow. Captain Dash, he said, has a sort of eczema, caused by "suppressed influenza." The other patients have common stomach troubles, due mostly to too much inferior

wine. For myself: After sounding me, in the master's partial presence (The latter was coming and going between the cabin and his sleeping-berth.), he remarked that as I was not fit to go any further in the vessel I ought to go ashore. Knowing my condition pretty accurately (so I thought), and as we were possibly bound down south, I asked Captain Dash if he cared to carry me further. He laughed and replied with vigour: "Yes, Purser!—Take you?—Yes! You can only die once; and what matters it where it is? Besides, y' know, it would give the men a half-holiday, unless you worked it in for a Sat'rd'y-afternoon or Sunday." "Do you know yet whether or not we are going south?" I enquired.

He answered in the affirmative; but as I began to tell the doctor my conviction about a southern passage building me up again, the Old Man started in to qualify his statement. This was no use, however, I had mended materially in three days, and was determined to go. The medicine-man put in another warning, and cautioned me "against any excitement, or even such physical exercise as the use of a small hammer." He asked: "What is your calling? What do you do for a living?" "Oh, write," said I. "—A literary man?" "Yes." "Well, a pen is quite enough

for you to wield. I'll send you some medicine off; take it regularly, and let tobacco and alcohol alone—that is a pipe or two a day, no inhaling, and a small peg of whisky once a week. You'd be better off if you never touched either." With that he returned to Gibraltar, taking the master with him.

Two days later: Whilst the master was ashore last night, and I had the house to myself, I, as the result of a fit of coughing, lost my senses. Perspiration rolled out of me, and as the last glimmer of consciousness went I thought it would never return. The faint came on too quickly for me to get out of the bunk and knock for help. But I had the presence of mind to "go off" flat on my back; and when the slow, weak dawn of reason came back, I felt far more the sense of returning from the dead, than I did on regaining consciousness after being lost overboard during my third year at sea.

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We have been here four days and expect to leave to-morrow—Monte Video for orders; but this is in confidence to The Chief, the officers and me, and we are not to send home any letters saying that we are going there. During our stay

here—in bitter weather again, all the time—there has been more trouble with the elder of the two Spaniards; just as before, his wife wanting him, or more money, or, preferably, both. And, oh, the passion of their parting this afternoon on the deck, by the gangway. Black-eyed Susan and her William could not have vied with such fervour of the south; no, not even although this man is nearing forty, and she is, I believe, a good thirty-five. The impossibility of going ashore has kept the hands generally within present-day wide limits of discipline.

On the day after we came in I counted a hundred and eleven sail, at anchor and at the examination ground. In two days the number sank to eighty-nine, then went up to ninety-three, and is now at eighty-three. With the exception of six or seven sailing-craft, these are all ocean-going steamers, averaging not less than two thousand tons apiece. Again I say it is a scandal to our organising abilities. What on earth we have been kept here for no one seems to know. We needed neither bunkers, stores, water, gun, nor men. However, it's an ill wind that blows no man any good. These long harbourings have enabled me to get on with my work unusually well, because of the master being ashore most of the

time, and my having the "house" to myself. I'm "the custodian," he says lightly.

Two pieces of gossip heard whilst lying here: Two U-boats got into the bay; before any damage was done one was caught and the other lies on the bottom. One of our submarines was out and came up where it ought not to have done, or without her identification mark showing properly; a patrol-boat was near, and the result is a submarine now being repaired in the dockyard yonder.¹

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We are in mid-Atlantic again, having glorious weather, and keeping a sharp look-out for a raider of whom our master heard on the day we left Gibraltar. During the first five days out he scarcely said a word to me; even his answers to my "Good-morning's" were gruff and hardly audible. Well, I thought, if I were a master and of occasional taciturn moods, I suppose I should at times resent this long intrusion on my select seclusion and privacy. Thus I kept out of his way and spent every possible hour at my work. But what I didn't like was the ruthless way in which

¹ Perhaps this was the case mentioned by Sir Edward Carson, in a public speech, showing how well submarines were looked after, when he said his son had been nearly sent to the bottom under the above conditions,

he drove the poor cats away from the "house"—after I had "tamed" them—whenever they came crying for food. They could not avoid giving vent to that awful wail of theirs, any more than being hungry. Then the *dénouement* happened.

He had been reading my re-print of *Hypatia*, liked its romance, vivid colouring and especially the vigour of the Northmen, and he came to talk about it. Hypatia herself had also stirred him pretty deeply. And in talking of her we drifted into a discussion of Greek mythology. He was interested in some of the human stories I remembered of the gods and goddesses. But of what good were they, after all?—he wanted to know, and so on; till it came to be an argument as to what utility the Greek idea of beauty had been to the world. And it was all to no purpose; try as I would to explain the influence of so far-reaching and powerful a thing—"the little maid would have her will and said: 'Nay, we are seven.'"

By-and-bye, however, I managed to turn the subject by looking at him and asking laughingly: "Aren't you afraid of taking cold by coming out of your shell so abruptly?" "Why, what d'you mean?" "This sudden flood of sociability. Doesn't it cost you an effort?—likely to give you a chill on the mind, if only as a reaction."—"Look here,

my fine fellow, if you'd had this — — itch all over you, as I've had, you'd have been as glum as me!" "But I should have thought a strong man like you would have been impervious to such pin-pricks of trouble," I remarked in the same smiling manner. He laughed again, saying: "Don't you imp me any of your devilisms of fine talk, or you'll be finding yourself in irons, then see if that's a pin-prick to you! What's a pin-prick to one man is two inches of cold steel to another."

Seeing that it would be too unkind to make any wonderment at the sudden disappearance of the irritation, and remembering the adage of not looking a gift horse in the mouth, I said I was glad to learn that he was so much improved, and that I hoped he would soon be quite well again. I saw by the quick turn of his head and the glint in his eye that he was about to tackle me on the last part of my expression; but at that moment around the corner came the mate with something concerning the work that was then being done, and I was left temporarily to the thread of my occupation.

For myself: How glad beyond measure I am that I followed my own instinct, instead of taking the advice of that Gibraltar doctor! The hacking

cough is gone, and I am feeling stronger than I have done during any previous part of the voyage. As soon as we struck warm weather I took to having a quick, sea-water scrub-down night and morning, from the usual stand-of-buckets abaft the house, which are filled afresh daily, when the wooden decks are wetted to keep them cool.

Then a beef cask was scrubbed out and placed in the after-starboard corner, and kept full of water for the purpose of wetting these decks (house and bridge-decks), without putting the hose on every morning; and I at once made use of it as a dipping-tub, first in the early morning, then at the end of the short twilight. This, I believe, is mainly the cause of my better health. I have tried several times to persuade Captain Dash of the strengthening properties of sea-water; but he laughs, says he prefers "dry batteries" and goes his way. He is no lover of water; sufficient for bare necessity is the measure thereof. Another thing: On coming into the warm weather I made a tiny table-top for my camp-stool, and took at once to working on deck all day and every day—except when an occasional squall drove me hurriedly to pack up and rush indoors.

The Chief is now well of his tonsil-snipping

experience, and is looking forward to seeing his friends on the Plate. With the hands generally matters are as usual, except that there has been a development to the story of the Duke of *Bermondsey*. It turns out that he has not been wounded and was never at the Front, so I learn from Captain Dash. He was in the army, right enough; but was discharged on his father's showing that he was under age. He will be of age, however, when we return home; and, as he has not been two years in the Merchant Service, the Conscription Act will then rake him in.

Thus we creep away to the south and west, with some talk of Neptune coming aboard on the "Line"; but I don't think it will go further than talk. At night we are a black and apparently lightless thing, yet with never less than three pairs of eyes keen to discover any chance stranger, to whom a wide berth is at once given. By day the horizon is scanned continually, because it was said in Gibraltar that down here one of the raiders was making some biggish hauls. Happily, however, we still pursue our peaceful way, yet ever prepared for the expected. Expected? Yes. In fact, there are some men here who quite believe that our capture and sinking is only a matter of time. The black-and-white cat disappeared over

a week ago, as mysteriously as the other two did; but Captain Dash makes neither comments nor enquiries on the subject. Probably the other would have gone before this; but she has taken to keeping out of the way, under my bunk in the day-time, and the steward and I supply her with food, so that her squalling is kept down to low-water mark.

I regret to say that I have a very unpleasant incident to record; one that I should leave in oblivion were it not that I am determined to write as faithful and just a log as circumstances and, I trust, some of the milk of human kindness will allow. Moreover, it may prove to be the basis of important happenings. Since the gunners came aboard and were admitted to our table, Captain Dash has taken his meals in his cabin. Thus his absence has given a certain freedom to our table; and a few mornings ago one of the officers—a heavily-built, choleric man—threatened to “pulverise” me, merely because I doubted that any one could *be sure* that Burns wrote of porridge, unless he or she could say in what poem, song or address the mention was. The man knew my physical condition quite well. Besides, when one of the A.B.’s put a fist in his face and swore to give him “some of it,” he did nothing in return.

The natural result was that I refused to sit at table with this officer, preferring the more mannerly second table. I told the master, of course, of my decision and the cause of it; and was astonished to see him rather flare up and complain that all troubles were brought to him by everybody. I let that pass, having heard it before. I know he has much to bear with in these days. But I dislike emphatically his attitude in this affair. After much cogitation on the matter I am convinced that he finds it impossible to remember that I am not really one of his crew. My position is that of an interloper who will now keep more in a corner than ever.

CHAPTER XV

Rio de la Plata!—Some items—That painful incident again—More of the river—A superlative sunset—Rosario, as a town and otherwise—War-changes—“They’ve had you, Purser”—Ship-chandler, thy name is Rogue—River-water, and a run on the medicine-chest—A much-envied man—Bound to London!—Freak-craft—Monte Video and the war’s effects on it.

So far, so good. Here’s “the Plate”—Rio de la Plata!—and still we are making our humdrum eight-and-a-half knots per hour, unseen by Mr. Gentlehun, therefore unscathed; whilst many a faster craft has gone to her last account. “It’s better to be born lucky than rich,” says the old saw, and I daresay that some of the crew think so, as we head for Monte Video, yonder on the low, south-west corner of the river’s mouth—a mouth so wide that the other side is leagues away out of sight even at a clear midday like this.

“The Plate” and “the Rio Grande”! (by sailors always pronounced “Ryo”) what pictures are conjured up in one’s mind by these names!—pictures of windjammer days, when the chantey “We’re bound to the Rio Grande!” had a meaning which it has now lost and will

never regain. Old and familiar to me in reading, it is nevertheless new in actual contact. Therefore I am all alert to discover what I can; for I hold that the keener a man's interests are, especially in passing things, the further is he from senility.

There is no delay in examination here. On our arrival in the roads the vessel comes alongside at once, and away we go for the harbour. We are moored just within the mouth, and our two first personal sensations are disappointment and amused derision. Item one, the war-news is not good enough; (This is our only intimation of the Russian upheaval, and we don't understand it a scrap. When we left Gibraltar there was no hint of it; now it appears to be *un fait accompli*.) item two, there is not a single letter for any one of us, except the master's official communications; item three, a couple of fat, middle-aged, pork-faced Germans in white suits are gratifying their corpulent souls by sailing two small, open cutters around us, with their national colours flying at the gaffs. "How great a thing is man!" said Lavater; and our Gentle Will, "The paragon of animals"; and Montaigne, "Of all creatures he is the vainest."

A matter of greater interest to us, however, is the news that the *Seeadler*, *Vineta*, *Ritz* or *Puyme*

(she has four names, it appears) has sunk a dozen of our vessels off the Brazilian coast, some of them in the very waters through which we have passed, and largely since we left Gibraltar. Of course, it may be rumour,¹ designed, like the rumours in the east-coast ports of the States, to affect our minds and drive us far round-about on our passages; and I, for one, am fain to take it with a pinch of salt. It hurts my British *amour propre* that any such craft should be able to send all those vessels to the bottom before being accounted for, or any one of them putting up a fight like that of the ever-to-be-renowned *Clan Mactavish*. I turn and feel that I *must* heave a lump of coal through the middle of one of these presumptuous, spotlessly-white, German mainsails. Then I remember: "How great a thing is man," etc., and turn again to make a fresh binocular examination of the town and inner harbour where German vessels are lying snugly, awaiting the day when we shall take them to balance up Mr. Gentlehun's piracies.

In this I am interrupted by the master coming to me (now that the port officials have paid their

¹ As quite recent evidence has shown, this was no rumour. The vessel, whatever her name was—and apparently there was but one—had sunk eleven of our tramps, aggregating some 26,000 tons,

visits and gone) and saying he has "a good bottle of port and some fine cake," and asking me into the cabin to "sample 'em" with him. This is the third time he has tried, in a similar way, to put aside the reserve that was set up by that painful incident at the table ten days ago; during which we have, however, talked and argued much as usual. I remind him of what the Gibraltar doctor said as to my letting alcohol alone. "Oh, that be d——d once in a while! Let's celebrate the end of a safe passage." Still I decline, and say finally that I will not drink with him so long as he holds to the needless, ill-tempered and abusive criticism that he threw at me over the inexcusable conduct of his officer. Naturally I am aware of the age-old usage, also of the general need, of a master taking the side of an officer; but here is a different case, inasmuch as I am not a subordinate member of the crew.

This, as a matter of course, I suppose, leads to a re-discussion of the affair; but as no fresh evidence is brought out, the case stands where it did. He tries to show me that I am unreasonable; that, "being the wiser an' older an' cleverer man an' that," etc., I should "forget and forgive." I say: "Yes, when reparation is made." "Oh, damn it, come, *you* ought to be above that!"

"Would *you* be above it?" I ask. He takes a turn on the deck, makes no reply; and I proceed to prove to him that the whole of his argument is hollow, and that he himself has no belief in its soundness. This is all amicably said and ended, as such things should be between men of reason; but I will not "sample" the wine.

So together we watch the unshipping of our ammunition and the mechanism of the gun (all that we have come in here for), the former to be taken ashore till we come down the river again. During this he tells me that we are going to Rosario to load; and, in a pleased way, that we shall go home from here, probably to Ireland.

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No wonder those early Portuguese navigators christened this wilderness of a river *la Plata* when they struck it. For no stream could have more the appearance of a reddish-muddy plate than it has throughout its first eighty miles or so, with the low, far-away banks serving as the raised rim of the plate. Another reason why it is so like a plate, so broad and shallow is it that it has but little current; it seems to be hardly like a *stream*. In the piping times of peace this was, according to statistics, one of the busiest of the world's great rivers. Now, at day-break, all the vessels

I can see are seven. In Buenos Aires' outer roads, where we have to wait for a change of pilots, the number increases to thirteen, counting every craft there is to be seen, from large steamers to small schooners, some of them nearly hull-down across the river.

Evening: We are away up where the river is about a sixth of a mile in width; and, whilst the full moon is high in the heavens astern, I am witnessing what will, I think, stand to me always as the sum total of gorgeousness in sunsets. In spite of Nature being limitless in such things, I doubt if she could do better than this. The sun is dead ahead up this straight stretch of the river, a hand's breadth above the horizon (holding the hand at arm's length), and already sombrely-ruddy enough to be looked straight at without eye-strain. To right and left of him, over the dark-green country and the sub-tropical banks of the stream, all conceivable tints of red, gold, pale yellow, and the very thinnest of greens stretch away to the indefinite grey-blue of evening. And here, straight down the middle of the erstwhile faintly-terra-cotta river, right up to the *Tramp's* stem and thinning as it reaches along her sides, there is the most regal, purple pathway that mortal eyes ever saw; whilst from it to the

luscious green of the swampy banks the water is shaded through deep-terra-cotta to pale reddy-brown. It is as if some western street gamin, in all his rags, dirt, and brazen disregard of the scene and all it means, were marching into some gigantic eastern example of beauty and splendour—thus seems this ocean scallywag at the moment. During this voyage I have several times been tempted to write of the sunsets and sunrises; now I am glad I did not; they would have been so poor by the side of this superlative colouring.

Captain Dash—now happily relieved from his long vigil on the bridge above us—comes from the cabin, and I say to him: “Jove, but this is ‘some’ sunset! I haven’t seen its like the world around!” “No, even Kaiser Bill an’ his war can’t alter these River Plate sunsets,” he replies. He is an old visitor here; so I enquire if he has ever seen a more gorgeous sunset than the one we are looking at. He cannot say that he has, confesses to having “no memory for such things,” and I, knowing him to be a materialist, let the matter drop, lest a pursuit of it should appear to be unkind. He goes up to talk with the pilot; and I feast my soul on the scene, until the sun and his retinue of colours disappear, leaving the great, round moon lighting up the river and its banks

with a more tender beauty than he could give, then I go in and make up my log for the day.

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We arrived here (Rosario) on Sunday and anchored a while in the river, abreast of the town. It was evidently a gala-day. "Dressed" motor-launches were common, and bunting was flying plentifully ashore, with the French tri-colour the most frequent in foreign flags. Our Red Ensign was given a show; but nothing like that of the French. I saw only one German flag, at a launch's gaff-end. In the evening we dropped down stream again and "tied up" to the quay, under a grain elevator.

There are no docks here; but a fine stone quay extends well above and below the town. In peacetime a dozen to a score steamers, with two or three large sailing craft, were a common sight at this quayside, whilst others were anchored in the stream—as yonder big German steamers and windjammers are in the great back-wash across the river. Now the maximum appears to be about half-a-dozen. Consequently the once-thronged streets, the bustle of shops and offices, and the merry life of evening-resorts have become things of the past. The staple living of the place was the shipping and the general handling of goods in

transit. Now the shipping is almost gone; therefore the circulation of money has dwindled in proportion.

The town is semi-Spanish (as one would expect), very flat and built of quarried stone (the streets are paved with big blocks of it); but the thoroughfares are much too narrow for so hot a country, especially in the centre of the town, where shopping facilities are excellent. One misses the cool, refreshing presence of water running along the channels by the side-walks, such as are fairly common in sub-tropical towns now-a-days. There is an efficient electric-tram service, by which you can go out through the squalid-looking suburbs and well into the country, and there feel that the recompense is worth more than the ride.

Lack of shipping here has sent hundreds of workers up country, left the less enterprising in want, compelled men of business to restrict their expenditure, and (heaven alone knows why) has increased the cost of living by twenty-five per cent.—so I am assured. Prices always were high “on the Plate.” Now, with considerably less money about, they are higher than ever; and it is predicted here that they will not come down with better times. A bowler-hat of five or six shillings at home costs ten here, and the general necessities of

life are on the same scale. Yet I have been told again and again, "the country is full of foodstuffs" and usually asked in the same breath: "But where are the ships to fetch the things away? Why don't you send them?" And when I have replied that for the most part they are serving the Navy, and that the others are on shorter runs than this, my questioners have shook their heads in some doubt, as who should say: How can the Entente countries be short of food, if they have the necessary ships?—seeing that we have the goods waiting for shipment. Then I have tried to assure them that Britain has more ships to-day than she had when war broke out, and again gone into the whys and wherefores of there being a shortage of vessels for long passages, and wound up with a declaration that we have not enough officers to go the round of the ships—which Captain Dash and others have told me is the case.

From a personal point of view Rosario is, in one sense, the worst place I was ever in. On the first night a few, almost harmless mosquitoes made my acquaintance; I did not make theirs. I had expected them—not this particular species, however—with some disquietude on my part, I must confess; because in the old times they used to punish me severely. And as a Harley Street

man told me only last summer that I have "one of the most baby-like skins" he had ever seen on a man, I feared that the piling up of years and their added toughness would not save me much. But if this was the brand of Rosario mosquito, I thought—well, let them come. I shall not be at the expense of a curtain to keep *them* away.

Then we moved to an elevator above the town. I had been ashore all day, was tired, slept unusually well, and awoke to find over a hundred bites on my face, neck, hands, wrists and ankles, and every one of them from a most virulent type of mosquito. Every bite was the size of a large half-pea, and was burning and irritating unbearably with poison. So I got a needle, opened them all, and had the satisfaction of seeing them exude a gum-coloured discharge that hardened pretty quickly till it was like stone nearly, and was about as transparent as gum. By keeping the places open I got some ease. When the master saw me he was, I believe, honestly surprised. He had never before seen a face change so completely in a night. Then he laughed, as usual, but not altogether hurtfully, and said: "They've had you, Purser."

After vainly trying several things to ease the irritation, one of them given me by the master, I went ashore and procured some strong solution

of ammonia. This was of some service, but not nearly satisfactory. Worse still it ran down my chest and set up papular eczema, another form of burning irritation. So between one and the other of them I had quite a nice time in Rosario. The mosquitoes, however, did not molest me again. Knowing that the ammonia would soon dry on my skin, and being now determined not to buy a protecting net, I smeared my hands, face and feet with paraffin each night, and slept peacefully, except for the irritation, in despite of all the "couz-eeen's" that the infinitesimal devils could buzz in my ears.

On the last day there I had occasion to call at the ship-chandler's, was shown some armadillo, scale-covered skins made up handsomely as work-baskets, and being in need of a couple of souvenirs, I bought two. The man was to send them down with the stores that evening. But, oh, thou chandler to ships, thy name is Rogue, and it stinks in the nostrils of all sea-going men. Find him where you will about the world, whatever be his colour, creed or age, he lives more by roguery than by honest dealing. We left Rosario early next morning; but, although that trading-fellow forwarded us load after load of stores, late into the night and after day-break, my souvenirs

did not come,¹ not even in spite of the fact that twice I sent word back by his men. Captain Dash said he was surprised at this, because the firm was a well-to-do one and had its head-quarters in Buenos Aires; but The Chief cited occasions when they had robbed both him and others of bundles of washing, etc. Hence I say: Hereafter and for ever I never trust a man who trades as a ship-chandler.

My final item as to Rosario is that my third and last attempt to illustrate any account of this voyage with photographs has gone to pieces in the hands of a photographer-druggist. There are no means of developing and washing aboard the *Tramp*; so I will try no more.

In certain reaches of the river, on the way up, some of our fresh-water tanks were filled, according to custom; others being pumped up as we came down. And now, stuck on a bar some sixteen miles above Buenos Aires (where we have already spent thirty-six hours, and there are no mosquitoes) we are beginning to know it, really or supposedly. Half the crew are complaining of stomach-troubles. There is a big run on the medicine-chest, and much of the steward's time

¹ Four letters to that ship-chandler have failed to bring an answer; and all have been delivered, so far as I can ascertain.

is being spent in decocting mixtures. At the outset men and officers alike went to him with their pains. Then it fell to the Prince's turn to grip his middle, roll up the whites of his eyes and groan that he was dying. But, true to his royal blood, *he* could not go to the steward; he must come up to the Old Man, and dearly should I have liked a snapshot of him as he stood here by the cabin-doorway, bent amidships, his forearms across the seat of pain, and his face defying description. But the light was too poor for a "snap" to be had.

It is the river-water that is blamed for this by the men, at any-rate. Before we shipped it, the cook set the notion going that the colour of the water was "due to the enormous number of sasparilla plants" that grew along the banks of the river. And as nearly every man knew the value of the shrub as a blood purifier, especially if he had been to any east-coast port in the States, also as every one needed something of the sort, it was looked forward to with some eagerness, drunk with avidity, and is now damned unceasingly. Alas, for the justice and consistency of human nature!

Meantime, the master swears they are a set of so-so "hoodahs," and that they will have to

drink the water so long as it lasts. Then, when the Prince, or some other complainer, has gone, he turns to me and says: " I suppose I shall have to get shore water in its place in Monte Video, or they'll all damn-well lay up an' stop the ship! "

Monte Video again: We came into the harbour this morning, and have—so I hear—been in a cloud of coal-dust all day, taking in bunkers. Tomorrow that job will be finished, our ammunition returned, fresh-water tanks filled up, and away we shall go again, hoping to evade the raider who is still enjoying his piratical liberty in these southern waters. When we came in this morning I was envied palpably by the whole ship's company. There were four letters for me, and not a single one for any other person, outside of the master's official communications. Poor beggars, I pitied them, knowing of old what it is to arrive off a long passage and get no letters. (Very few of them have had a letter since we left Castellamare.) So, in accordance with old-time custom, I offered some of them my envelopes.

An hour after we came in Captain Dash told me " in confidence " that we are bound to London. I was glad to know this, both because it *was* to be the metropolis and for the sake of my correspond-

ence; and I thanked him, saying I should respect his trust. Before we went ashore, an hour later, the same news was brought to me by an officer and the steward. Then, whilst leaning against the after-bulwarks of this islet, I heard the cook and some of the men discussing the same point. So the "secrecy" of our destination was soon out this time.

Tired out with touring about the town and seeking information, I have left the master ashore, and come aboard to write to that Rosario ship-chandler and to England, make up my log, and attend to these physical troubles—*i.e.* bites and eczema, both of which have now lessened their irritation considerably. In fact, the bites are nearly gone.

Next evening: There came into the harbour this morning a vessel that shows the action of this war on merchant shipping. She is the *Hebe*, a Rotterdam ice-breaker! When such a craft is turned into a cargo-carrier and sent on a voyage of twelve thousand odd miles, at a time of the year when her services are needed in that for which she was built, there is no wonder that "freak" vessels from the American lakes are plodding to and fro across the North Atlantic. As for her being named *Hebe*—could ignorance and

grotesqueness any further go? She is one of the ugliest things I have ever seen afloat.

As an outcome of a misunderstanding about the coal we have had another day in harbour. Thus I have been able to extend my enquiries about war-conditions here and up the country generally. In the town itself the changes are not nearly so great as they are in Rosario and, I hear, in Buenos Aires; and they are less still up country. This is because Uruguay has lived far less on exports than the Argentine has. Of course, shipping has decreased, as it has all down this coast; for which reason there is a comparative falling-off in trade, labour and money, as is only natural during a war that has affected economically every coastline and hinterland in the world.

Monte Video is, however, the capital of an unambitious country that can supply itself with all the necessities and many of the luxuries of life. Again, by some curious racial bent the Uruguayans seem to be a more independent and resolute, though not a more initiative, people than the Argentinos. At least, these of the capital give one that impression; and I find this opinion to be common amongst the Britishers whom I have met here, ship-masters and shore-dwellers alike. Moreover, the supposition is partially proved by

the fact that the people are satisfied to live on their own efforts, self-contained and self-supporting, rather than on imported things.

In its architecture, building materials and laying-out the town is much the same as Rosario; but it has the advantage of being built on a slope. Prices generally have not gone up more than fifteen per cent., and so far as I can ascertain even this is unwarranted, except on a few imported articles. Thus here, as all the world over, the trader is at his time-dishonoured work. The Uruguayans hereabouts are taking the war with the philosophy of the non-combatant who is practically unaffected by it, and perhaps too indifferent on his own account as to what may be the result to him if a given side were to win. Or is it that their apparent indifference springs from some settled conviction that the baneful side cannot win? They say they have no fear of the German colonies amongst them. Some men have assured me that the Germans here are disliked by the natives; but from further information I should say that the attitude is one of indifference rather than antipathy. Two things are certain: Britishers stand as well here and in Buenos Aires as the French do in Rosario, and the Germans have no body of friends anywhere on this river.

CHAPTER XVI

An impossible raider—Lost excitement—No tobacco—A great day for me—Artist and public—A black men's fight—Kindly sarcasm—A literary discussion, and a truth discovered—The Prince a-begging—Wreckage—The sheep at the fold—Within the gates.

ON the high seas again, my superficial, physical troubles practically gone; and here I find myself reflecting on the fact that I am going home, from a voyage of over twenty thousand miles and seven ports (not counting Gibraltar, because that was never a place for the interviewer), without having been once interviewed. For one whose books are reviewed almost wherever there are journals or newspapers in English this is, I think, something of a record. True, our master has threatened to bring it about by informing on me; but in the end my wishes and his mercy have prevailed.

Since yester-evening the water has changed from that peculiar greenish hue of the Brazilian coast—or rather from fifty to three hundred miles of it—to a more mid-Atlantic and sub-tropical blue. The weather is genial. As I sit down to my morning's work under the awning, here comes

Captain Dash to tell me that whilst ashore in Monte Video he "heard of a new raider out this way—a converted sailing ship doing sixteen knots with auxiliary engines." I look at him for a moment to ascertain if he is serious. His face is fixed enough, and his eyes are quiet. "Do you believe it?" I ask, picking up my pen from where it has fallen on the deck. "Well, you know they're up to all sorts of dodges, an' with a sailing ship they'd get nearly alongside a tramp without being suspected." "But the sixteen knots from auxiliary engines, in a hull not built to carry them?" "Oh, I don't know!" he replies off-handedly and looks away over the side.

Of course, he knows quite well that he is trying to bring me water in a bucket without a bottom; but, to finish the metaphor, he tries to deliver water, all the same;—that is, until he sees he cannot, then he strolls off, with a Parthian shot about "bringing coals to Newcastle," and leaving me wondering whether this is a harmless effort to "pull my leg," a serious test of my nautical knowledge, or a chance shot to set disturbance working in my mind till he should think fit to put the matter right. Oh, these robustious jokers who never see the inappropriateness of a "joke"! I believe they think they fill a "felt want" in

the scheme of things. In some backwash sort of way I suppose they have their uses; in any case, they certainly have their abuses.¹

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Just south of Capricorn, and still we are churning along safely; whilst, ten to one, some faster and better equipped vessels are being caught. We have passed about half-a-dozen craft since we left the Plate, all of them being happily at such a distance as to save us from going off our course to evade them. Two were full-riggers; and as the rumour of "a sailin' ship raider with auxiliary engines an' sixteen knots" was then—and still is—common aboard, they were watched very keenly and suspiciously by more than stokers and deck-hands, until only their top-gallantsails and royals were seen on the horizon.

I suppose that if I had possessed a sensational

¹ Captain Dash was not "pulling my leg." This raider was the *Seeadler*, an American barque. She was captured during a voyage from New York to Archangel, taken into a German port and fitted with internal combustion engines that gave her a speed of twelve knots. Thus she could, and did, act as a windjammer in trouble, and so get steamers to facilitate their own capture by approaching her. She was fitted with wireless, two 4-in. guns and a number of machine-guns. She sank a dozen vessels, and sent some 200 captured seamen in a French barque to Rio de Janeiro; then appears to have moved her hunting-grounds to the Indian Ocean, where she was at last laid by the heels.

pen, I should have squeezed two or three pages of excitement out of our passing those harmless packets. In fact, I begin to fear, now that I am nearing the end of my log (if the voyage continues according to our hopes), that I have not made half so good a use—selling use, that is—of my materials as a romancer would have done. But then it is difficult for a plain realist to flirt with romance; he has so heavy a hand at the game. Besides, the realist, in his reverence for truth in presentment, probability and other essentials of life, is so handicapped that he, likely enough, does not put a sufficient valuation on the art of entertaining his readers by worked-up excitement, long-armed uses of the improbable, etc. However that be, I set out to write an uncoloured record of what happened, in so far as it might be written without giving personal offence; and if the voyage ends as it has happily so far continued there will be no excitement here, except what the crew cause amongst themselves.

In fact, there is a little going fore and aft now; but it is too mild to cause ructions. It concerns tobacco. When we were in Gibraltar—where every sea-going man expects to get his smoking exceptionally cheap—prices had gone up so much that the master left officers and men alike to lay

in their stocks from the bum-boat; which they did, but only enough to carry them to the Plate. They thought to have got tobacco and cigarettes there as cheap as, or cheaper than, in Gibraltar. On the contrary, all forms of the "weed" were as expensive in Rosario and Monte Video as at home. Hence no man bought for himself; and the master, resenting the men's grumbling at having to pay him sixpence a pound on tobacco bought for them, and in face of the high charges on the Plate, did not lay in more than he needed for himself. Now there is practically no tobacco in the ship, and great are the lamentations hereof. What surprises me really is that officers and engineers are in the same foolish-virgin condition. They were all told—executive and men alike—that they would not be provided for in this case; and here they are, offering threepence for a cigarette and a shilling to fifteen-pence for an ounce-cake of tobacco! And prices are going up almost daily.

I have resumed my morning and evening dips, and in return for a cigarette I get freshly-drawn water for the purpose. By-the-way, I notice that my diary announces a new moon at two minutes past one to-day. Here it is a half-moon.

We are over the "Line," in latitude $5^{\circ} 40'$ N. and longitude $25^{\circ} 57'$ W., and nothing in particular has happened to break the even tenor of things. The only change is a rise in the price of tobacco, and a gloom consequent to the fact that there is no supply.

This is a great day to me; hence so far as my husbanded stock of cigarettes would go I have handed them out. After three months and ten days' work I have now put "Finis" to a book of a hundred and fifty thousand words, besides keeping up this log, making notes, etc., for future use, doing some reading, and all in spite of that bout of influenza, the mosquito bites and the eczema. Not a bad piece of work for a semi-invalid, and I thank heaven that I am still able to do the like. If I had a bottle of wine I would open it and ask the Old Man to share it with me. But such is impossible; so the day has to go by without any celebration. Well, perhaps it is better so. Who knows but that in celebrating the thing now, one may be storing up chagrin by making a feast about a failure.

And yet does public recognition, or the lack of it, make any difference to a creative worker's opinion of his effort? Not a scrap. And it is the same whether he be a true artist or only an

exponent of mediocrity. If he is of the former suffering tribe, and a sufficiency of the discerning public applauds the work, well and good, it proves what he thought of the thing; and if it doesn't—all the same in a way; its action only shows that for the time being it has lost its discernment and is too occupied with something that it will throw away to-morrow. And if it be that "the fool many" catches on; then he turns around, pinches himself, metaphorically, re-examines the work and himself and begins to lay to his soul such questions as: "Am I falling off? Have I made a mistake this time? Or is Jade Fortune having a satirical joke at my expense?"

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There has been trouble to-night. I was sitting in a deck-chair on the after-end of the islet, smoking and cogitating of things generally, when a confused hubbub on the deck below attracted my attention. On looking over the rail I saw, indistinctly in the semi-darkness and shafts from port-lights, two of the negro-stokers belting away at each other with tin-cans—small store-cans got from the steward, and supplied with wire-handles, to carry their oatmeal-water below. They were the thin, hymn-singing fellow and Rogers, a stouter, quieter one. They had rushed along the alleyway,

one after the other, and had pulled up on the open deck, just below me and a few yards short of the officers' quarters. But it was very soon evident that they were both beating the air much more than one another. So I said nothing. A door beneath me opened. The sham fight ended at once, and I resumed my pipe and meditations.

Five minutes later there was another rush, a bang, a yell of savage vengeance, vague and meant to be terrifying, then a groan and another bang. Again I arose and looked over, thinking there must be real action this time. And there ought to be, persons considered. The Prince was there—delivering a smashing blow, with a tin-can, at Rogers; but it missed, and it hardly seemed to me to be meant as a hit. It was from the big Prince that the yell had come, not the groan. He belched out another when the blow missed, gathering himself for a new effort. When it fell, however, Rogers was half-way around to the other side of the hatch. (Between this islet and the galley, which is next to the stokehold, etc., and all cased-in, there is a hatch about twelve or fifteen feet square, with a three-feet passage-way on three sides and a narrow slit on the other. And here it was, in this sort of cock-pit, that the fracas took place.)

When the Prince found that his opponent had slipped from under his nose he seemed to be rather surprised. I thought for a moment that he was going to kneel down and examine the iron plates for some trace of the lost man. Then he straightened up, threw a great, savage look around him, saw Rogers across the deck, and tracked the opposite way around the hatch, just in time to meet him at the after-starboard corner (whence, I suppose, Rogers' intention was to dive below), make another thunderous miss-hit with the can, and stagger the night air with a third of those awe-inspiring noises—a noise such as the English alphabet will never spell. I began to think that the whole affair was a well-acted blackman's farce.

Then I saw the Prince drop his can, close with the other and appear to be trying to break his neck. But Rogers freed himself, snatched up a formidable piece of wood, and stood at bay between the hatch and the galley. In two or three moments the Prince had his can in hand again, was into the galley, out on the opposite side, had his enemy in the rear and was pouring his can of water on the man's head, without the latter having the wit to surmise that the Prince had entered the galley as a doubling movement. At the instant of the can being emptied I guessed the

evil purpose of its contents and could not repress a shout of: " You coward! " He had dipped his can into the copper " boiler " on the stove, in the hope that it was hot enough to scald. Happily it was not; for this was about nine o'clock, and the galley-fire was then nearly out.

So far the whole affair had not occupied more than a minute, and nothing beyond that strange noise made by the Prince, some indistinct rumblings and guttural breathings had escaped their mouths. Now others came running on to the scene, as the Prince drew back and brought the edge of his can down on Rogers' head. There was no farce about that blow. The man staggered forward under it, then turned, made straight in at his enemy, and gave him just what he himself had received. In the midst of running feet, questions and lights, the two blacks flew at one another. Fortunately they were both unarmed. As they came together the master and a couple of officers arrived, and began to haul apart the snarling, grunting, biting and gouging disputants. Captain Dash told them what the consequences would be if they did not desist and return to work. Heedless of this, the Prince made another attack; but he was stopped, and Rogers fell back.

Just then out of the alleyway on Rogers' side

of the deck came the hymn-singer, crying in his falsetto: "Jesu, lu-u-ubber o-ob my." On that last word Rogers fetched him one of the finest open-handers I ever saw delivered. It caught the singer flat on his cheek, knocked his head half-around, and set all the spectators laughing; whilst the thin one went back along the alleyway without a word of resentment, and almost at once he was heard in the darkness: "Leh me to-o Dey buzzum fly," etc.

Thus was the fracas brought to an end, and the steward strapped up the wounds. One curious fact I noticed was that although the antagonists were the whole of the stokehold-watch for the time being, no engineer put in an appearance from beginning to finish of the trouble, neither did any one ever understand what it was about.

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My morning dippings are over; the weather is now too cold for them; but they have done me a large amount of good. Now having finished my book, read all that I have and care to read, and being too "nervy" ever to be idle, I have settled down to the task of making "plates" and lettering them for the teak-wood doors. There are eighteen of them; and I am cutting the "plates" from cigar boxes supplied by the Old Man. The

vessel is now smart in her new coat of battle-grey; so I am painting the "plates" grey and lettering them in white. I have just done a sample one for the saloon, when along comes Captain Dash, and I ask him if the thing will do. He is full of smiling praise touched with irony, also such lightly-sarcastic remarks as: "Didn't know we'd got an artist aboard," and "Ah, you're a dark horse, Purser. I'm afraid I haven't got at the bottom of you yet." Having measured him off as a psychologist, I smile, say I will go and put this name on one of the saloon doors and see how it looks.

When I return I find him in his chair near mine. He has a copy of my *Gulliver's Travels* in one hand, his pipe in the other; and again I could say to him, as Lady Macbeth to her lord: "My thane, thy face is full of speech." In a minute he says: "Y'know, I don't think this is a good satire. You say it is one—on Englishmen an' politics at that time; but I think it's too clever—it isn't plain enough. Without the notes I'll bet the average man would just read it as a fantasy an' nothing else." I agree with him, and he continues: "Y'know, it seems to me a satire on a people, or a system of politics, or any big thing like that, wants to be plain enough to smack you in the face

as you read it, not stuffed with clever foolin' like this. No, it isn't top-hole, Purser, an' I don't care a damn who says it is. An' if I understand you, a classic is top-hole." Again I assent, and say how highly it is praised by bookmen. "Yes, for what you call its invention, I s'pose, not for its plain satire, I'll swear." It seems to me that he has touched home, and I tell him so. This gives him gratification, for he is pleased when he finds that he has struck bookish "ile" like the above. We each one have a weak spot somewhere; the man or woman without one would be insufferable. "An' who was this Swift, any-how?" he asks, after relighting his pipe. I give a few brief particulars; but am interrupted with: "Oh, the chap with a Stella!—Yes, a star he couldn't reach, or wouldn't reach, I don't know which. Y'know, I can't get hold of that—it's past *me*; for a man to love a woman an' not want her—I mean get her, when there's nothing special in the way,—well, *that* beats me." I remind him that "it takes all sorts to make a world." "Yes, an' he was one of your odd uns—a disgruntled church politician, about the worst o' the bunch. But I like the way he writes—yes, I like that."

Captain Dash has a fine sense of plain, straightforward English, also of the Macaulayan flowing

periods, providing that they don't flow too much; but he likes it best "with a bite in it." In addition, he is keen to detect any use of the long arm of coincidence, or of defects in the temperament of characters in fiction—I mean too glaring departures from consistency. Following a side-track in the discussion he suddenly delivers himself of this: "Y'know, Purser, it seems to me, if I understand you right about literature an' journalism an' that, there's too little literature in your journalism, an' a damn'd sight too much journalism in your literature. An' in my opinion American magazine journalism is all away ahead of ours."

I know the reason of this last opinion; it is a matter of "bite." So, remembering his admiration of strenuous English I tell him of Junius. He is interested at once, both in the power of the writer and the mystery. He has never before heard of the man, and is eager for all I can tell him. I now find that whilst Dumas' popularity has made him acquainted with the islet of Monte Christo, Quixote is only a name to him, as is the Man of the Iron Mask; but of the many things he would like—Silvio Pelico's ten years in prison, *The Castle of Otranto*, Reynolds' *Wherwolf*, *Frankenstein*, *The Devil on Two Sticks*, *Rabelais*, *A Tramp*

Abroad, The Jumping Frog, The Innocents Abroad, and other classics of the same types he knows not even the names. His book-buying has been indiscriminate, mostly in American paper-backs, hence its *olla-podrid* nature. Only his own inherent good sense has kept him from literary trash.

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Whilst the master is superintending and helping to make a crow's-nest on the fore-deck, I am sitting on the after-part of the islet, as usual, painting the name-plates, when along comes the Prince and stands near. Without looking up at him I see that he is in working-rig, and that perspiration is rolling out of his black skin wherever it is to be seen. I know by his manner that he wants to speak to me and am curious to know why, seeing how all hands are aware that I am only a passenger.

So presently, still intent on the lettering, I query: "Well?" "Sah," he begins in deadly earnestness and stooping till I fear his perspiration will fall on my hands or work, "Oh, sah, tabac!—yo' gib?—on'y leele bit." He puts his thumb-end one joint from the end of his forefinger, holding his big, black, wet hand almost between my face and the camp-stool table on which I am working. I glance up at his strained face, and he continues,

rolling up much of the whites of his eyes as he says: "On'y leele bit. Sah, I no can wo'k—no steam, no tabac. Deh Chief——" "But why didn't you get tobacco in Rosario? You all knew the captain was not buying for you," I interrupt. "Ah, yeh, sah, but not tink so," he replies smilingly, his face and hand still as before. "What, do you mean to say you thought there *would* be tobacco for you?" "Yeh, sah," and the winning, trusting, reassuring, smiling, childish expression on this streaming face is more than I can describe except in this bald way. "I can't believe it," I say, for the simple reason that I don't know what else to say. "Gospel, sah," he replies, just as before. "Yo' please gib me leele, so I get steam, an' no hab De Chief——." I arise and move towards where I sleep, with his thanks already following me.

As I come forth again, with an ounce-cake in my hand, I see that the look on his face is worth the piece, although I had intended to give him half of it. So I hand it over, saying: "Mind, you will get no more." He takes a bite at one corner, as a poor, street-child might at a piece of chocolate, and goes his way, mouthing thanks till he is out of hearing.

Later on I learn that his "cheek" is the talk of

the deck, fore and aft; and I am thankful that it is not emulated at all. Thus we plod along, re-enter the actual danger-zone; and I, having completed the lettering, pack a handbag with my MSS. and such other small treasures as can get into the thing, and place it handy.

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The master has been up practically all the night, on the go all day, and will be so till daylight comes again—or nightfall—or daybreak, whichever may see us to a safe anchorage or moorings. It is more than any man should be expected to bear. Of course, it is not done by all; but, then, if anything serious happens, the first question is: Where was the master?—Asleep? Then the trouble begins. Since yester-evening the watches on the bridge have been doubled, and a look-out kept from the crow's-nest, both of which will now be maintained to the end.

During the day we have passed through some wreckage—painted boards such as form bulk-heads in living quarters, deals and a lifeboat-tank; then, twenty miles or so to the east of the tank, what appeared to be the long-boat of a large sailing ship. It was awash, painted a pale-green inside, an unusual colour for a steamer's boat.

On the outer side she was formerly of a dark-brown, then white, now with the white partially washed off, as if she has been long in the water. Another proof of this were the frayed life-lines, thus showing that her condition is not the result of recent piracy. This conclusion clears away the anxious looks from half-a-dozen faces below me and abaft. For although work and play go on as ever, the thought of running into the midst of the devilish work has a certain sobering effect, as it had in the Mediterranean. There would be something to marvel at if such were not the case.

Now we pass more planks, etc., then an American liner going west, with a large gun forward and another aft. The last fact gives us food for comment and speculation. Has America come in at last?—etc., till we become all eagerness for authentic news, and again how like we are to a man groping through intense darkness. Whereas a wireless installation would give us the eyes we lack. Later a French liner heaves into sight away the port quarter, crosses our stern obliquely and disappears—for Brest or Havre. A big, twelve-knot tramp comes lumbering after us; another crosses our bows, outward-bound; we overhaul a “freak”-packet from the lakes. And so we begin to feel that we “are still in the land of the

living"—in other words, if we get a sudden visit from Fritz, there is help at hand.

Next day: This afternoon we came up with two patrol-boats, and immediately there was prevalent the general idea that we had met with our shepherds. We were one of the wandering sheep coming home from the moors and wolds, and here were the shepherds to keep away any wolf that might be following or lurking about.

Now, as I prepare for sleep, my small bag handy, I hear that the Bishop light bears broad away the port bow; and I "go off" in the fervent hope of seeing Old England when I awake again, also wishing that Captain Dash could get some sleep.

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We are being escorted through scenes concerning which I may not write—not till the war is over; then I will put a new conclusion to this chapter, if needful. The only comment I allow myself at present (and perhaps the Censor will cut this out) is that our escort is far enough away for us to be torpedoed before he would know of the fact.

With the pilot come English newspapers. And what a rush for news, especially of that Russian revolution and the stagnation on the eastern Front! Of course, we shall have to get old papers

for information on these points, particularly on the former. We are disappointed in that there has been no great Spring "push" on the western side; but the pilot is a breezy, cheery fellow who apparently keeps his mind abreast of the times. He tells us all is well, and whiles away the evening (Whilst we lie at anchor, awaiting dawn.) with yarns of Channel-life as it is to-day; but, unfortunately, they are not for publication yet.

It is forenoon, clear and sunny, when we round the North Foreland and head up the Thames, our voyage as good as over, and our thanks registered in Heaven that we are once more safely home.





